VISIT…

Dungeons & Dragons® Supplement

Dungeon Master's Guide™ II

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Introduction

Being a DM is a big job. You've got all those rules to master, a cast of thousands to portray—heck, you've got a whole world to create.

The size of the DM's job is why you're holding *Dungeon Master's Guide II*. The 320 pages of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* was sufficient to get a campaign world thriving, but it just scratched the surface of what's possible.

Truth-in-advertising time: Here's 288 pages, and it's just a second scratch on the surface of what's possible.

But what a scratch! Whether you run a game that's one kick-in-the-door battle to the death after another, or one fraught with tense negotiations and political intrigue, there's something in here that can help you out with the big job of being DM.

Here's a sample. Flip through the book and check out the following:

Adapting to Different Play Styles (page 7): The psychodramatist, the cool guy, the brilliant planner, the outlier, and the lurker. Who are these people, and how can you keep them all happy at the same game table?

Preparation (page 32): How to get ready for the game if you're under time pressure; step-by-step checklists for 1 hour of prep time, 2 hours, 3 hours, and more.

More Traps (page 40): Tired of yet another spike-bottomed pit? Here you'll find fire summoning traps, painful hobbling traps, trapped weapons, fey rings, and spell turrets. Many are built at multiple Challenge Ratings so you can find one that's appropriate for your characters—or maybe just a little bit tougher.

Exotic Encounter Locations (page 47): Goodbye, 20-foot-square dungeon room. Hello, ice bridge, evil crypt, treetop village, and burning building!

Encounter Tables (page 65): Every DM knows that PCs don't always go where you planned. Now you're ready with a fun encounter when their whims or overconfidence take them into an infernal vortex, a sewer tunnel—or the wizards' guild late at night.

Medieval Society (page 81): If the characters go *really* far afield, they might find themselves in a different nation or culture altogether. Now you have everything from systems of government to political plots to random rumors to make every part of your setting come to life.

Laws and Punishment (page 101): Player characters often wind up on the wrong side of the law—sometimes justly, sometimes unjustly. Here's how to handle the arrest, the trial, and the sentence . . . or at least the part of the sentence that the characters serve before they prove their innocence or bust out of prison.

Magic Events (page 109): When you're creating the climax to an adventure, you want a magic event such as the sudden appearance of a burning eye on the horizon or the gradual growth of an inky blackness that grows larger with each life it consumes.

Saltmarsh (page 119): D&D veterans will remember Saltmarsh as the site of an adventure published in the early 1980s. Now it's back as an example of a fully detailed town. You can either put Saltmarsh in the world you create, or call it by another name and use the information for one of your own towns.

Unique Abilities (page 157): Sometimes you want an NPC that's unaccountably weird. Now you can create characters with extra limbs, fey spirits, or beings that are just "abysmally wretched."

Complex NPCs (page 160): At one time or another, every DM has needed a statted-up bounty hunter in a hurry. Now you've got one, plus other DM staples such as the tribal shaman, the cultist, and the martial artist.

Businesses (page 180) and PC Organizations (page 210): PCs do more than just delve into dungeons. Whether they want to invest their loot in a merchant caravan or take over the local thieves' guild, you're ready.

Teamwork Benefits (page 189) and Companion Spirits (page 194): We've got two new ways for the players at your table to act like a team: teamwork benefits that represent experience and specialized training, and companion spirits that grant magical powers to the PCs and their allies.

Magical Locations (page 235) and Magic Items (beginning on page 250): We haven't forgotten that players spend as much time with the "blue books" as the DMs do. In addition to new items (and new ways to customize the ones you've got), we offer magic locations that grant you powers beyond what mere trinkets can offer.

Being a DM is indeed a big job—but it has a commensurately big reward. You get to create entire worlds, fueled only by your own imagination. You get to play every dastardly villain, every savage beast, and every comic-relief innkeeper. You get to ensnare your fellows in intricate webs of plot and scheme.

Best of all, you get to look up from your dice and your notes every now and then to see your friends hanging on your every word—or laughing uproariously because they're having such a good time. You're making that happen.

So look up every once in a while and bask in the joy you've created. Do it enough, and you'll never want to relinquish your spot at the head of the table.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

Dungeon Master's Guide II makes use of the information in the three D&D core rulebooks: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*. It doesn't directly reference any other books, but it draws on the accumulated heritage of D&D supplements published since 2000. Although possession of any or all of these supplements will enhance your enjoyment of this book, they are not strictly necessary.

Illus. by A. Swekel

A game of Dungeons & Dragons is an experience you and your players create together. As a Dungeon Master, you lead the way, bouncing between roles as author, actor, umpire, and traffic cop, as the situation demands. Though these might seem like unrelated roles, each calls on one key skill: communication. By brushing up on your skills as a communicator—both as talker and, even more important, as listener—you can transform from a good DM into a great one.

YOUR JOB AS DM

Your job as a DM is simple: to make the game fun for the players and for yourself.

No other goal takes priority over this one. You are not trying to please anyone outside your gaming group. You won't find a single right or wrong way to have a good time, nor a single ideal style of play you and your group ought to be working toward.

Increase your group's fun quotient by following these simple principles:

Read Your Players: Few players, even when directly prompted, can tell you outright what they're looking for in a D&D game. By observing indirect cues, you can get a better read on your players than they can usually give you directly.

Something for Everyone: Once you know what your players want, you can take steps to cater to each of them, collectively or in turn.

Keep the Energy Level Up: Maintain your focus and sense of excitement. Use simple presentational techniques to project that excitement to your players.

Keep It Moving: As in any form of entertainment, pacing is everything. Learn to nudge, shape, and prod the action to minimize boredom without taking away your players' sense of control over their characters' actions.

Be Prepared: Whether you're blessed with loads of prep time or cursed with too little, ensure that you use the time you have to your best advantage.

THE BIG QUESTION

Whenever you worry that a session might be taking a turn for the worse, pause for a moment and ask yourself: Are we having fun?

If you look around the room and your players are leaning forward in their seats, energized, smiling, and enthusiastic, the group is already having fun, and you're doing a superb job whether you're ready to

admit it or not. Relax, pat yourself on the back, and keep doing what you're doing, even if it doesn't match the unwritten rules of DMing in your head. When you're on a roll, go with it, not with theories you think you "should" be using.

If, however, you look around and see a group of bleary-eyed, distracted, or annoyed gamers, take a deep breath and calmly assess the situation. Using the tools found in this chapter, you can set the situation right before the players even notice they're unhappy.

SECONDARY PRIORITIES

DMs sometimes follow priorities that get in the way of a fun game. The goals they set are not necessarily bad, but can cause problems when they come ahead of the ultimate goal of entertaining the group.

Fidelity to Prepared Background: Many DMs, after working with feverish devotion on their carefully imagined fantasy worlds, come to value their background information more than the experiences of the players who explore it. Given a choice between creating an exciting scene that moves the story along or remaining true to their notes, these DMs cling to the notes.

Instead of thinking this way, you should make your world serve the game, not the other way around. No part of your world is set in stone until it becomes part of the game. You might have an emotional connection to some elements of your material, but your players don't, because they haven't encountered those elements yet. Running a game is its own pursuit, with its own creative responsibilities. It's not a substitute for being a novelist. Look at your background information as a work in progress, subject to instant revision if the moment demands a change that would result in greater entertainment. This statement remains true whether you're revising the personality of a shopkeeper, changing the location of a clue, or slicing a few centuries of history out of your millennia-long saga of the westfaring elves.

Internal Consistency: Even details that do become part of the game can be fudged on occasion. You shouldn't change details the players vividly remember, because that punctures their belief in your imaginary world. Minor background details, on the other hand, should never be allowed to get in the way of an entertaining choice. Distances are a good example; few players have an emotional investment in them. Let's say you established three sessions ago that it takes two days to get from the village to the dungeon. Now you have a chance to do an exciting chase sequence from one location to the other, if you're willing to ignore this previously established but relatively inconsequential fact by dramatically narrowing the distance. If no one else will notice or care about the change, allow the continuity error.

Historical Accuracy: The standard D&D world is a colorful fantasy environment that draws on certain beloved images from medieval history, from kings to knights to castles. History buffs are often tempted to incorporate their knowledge of the real medieval era into their games, foregrounding esoteric cultural differences, nasty facts about disease and medicine, and the period's confining social structure. If you are such a DM, ask yourself if you're increasing the players' enjoyment by implementing these details, or merely giving yourself the chance to indulge your superior knowledge of the subject. Will your players enjoy your efforts to realistically clamp down on their PCs' personal freedom, or do they, like most players, play D&D partly for a vicarious sense of power and control?

Maintaining Authority: Players aren't alone in their quest for power. DMs, given responsibility for everything from world creation to the placement of traps to control

CHIN UP!

Most problems that crop up while running a game stem from one of two sources. One, discussed at length throughout this chapter, lies in the need to harmonize different tastes within the group, with all the tricky communication issues that entails.

Second is self-confidence. Many DMs who do a fine job and bring their players back to the gaming table week after week needlessly beat themselves up. They fret over their skills because they measure themselves by an impossible, imagined standard.

Don't use the advice in this chapter as a yardstick to hit yourself with. You don't have to use any of the exercises given here to be a good DM. Your job is to entertain your group.

Running a game can be an intimidating task that calls on a huge variety of unrelated skills: memory for rules, a head for numbers, imagination, verbal agility, and sensitivity to group moods. Most dauntingly, it requires the confidence to take center stage in front of a group—an act that terrifies many self-assured people. Anyone who does even a half-decent job of DMing should be congratulated just for trying to marshal these skills.

Just as players have different tastes, so do DMs. Our tastes tend to match our skills. No one is equally adept at all the tasks that running a game entails. If you're best at improvising dialogue and thinking up plot lines, you're likely to run games with a storytelling bent. If you're the type who easily retains rules detail, you're probably great at running combats in which the monsters use their obscure spells and special abilities to maximum effect. If you're best at designing a setting and doing extensive prep work, you can dazzle your players with gorgeous maps and entice them to explore the far reaches of your world.

You don't expect your players to be equally good at everything, so don't expect it of yourself. Be aware of your weak spots and take measures to counteract them. A little compromise in other directions can go a long way; no one expects you to be infinitely versatile.

Most important, be aware of your strengths, and give yourself credit for them. If you are reading this book at all, and you care about improving your game, you are probably already a better DM than you think you are.

over the conversation in the room, sometimes let that power go to their heads. The greatest power you have is the power of refusal, to thwart your players' attempts at action. As anyone who has worked in a job with a petty bureaucratic component can tell you, the power of refusal can be fun. The power to say no, to assume social authority over our friends, is seductive but must be avoided. Although you need the respect of your players to keep a game session focused, always remember that your authority is a tool and not an end in itself. Like any tool, it goes awry when you assault your coworkers (in this case, your players) with it. Your authority should create fun for everyone. It should never be used to create fun for yourself at the expense of your players. The worst possible answer to the question "Are we having fun?" is "No one else is, but I'm happy."

On reflection, you might find that another treasured hallmark of your DMing style makes the game less fun. If so, you should always be prepared to set it aside. It's entirely possible that a trait or preference for play style that your last group loved just doesn't work for your current group.

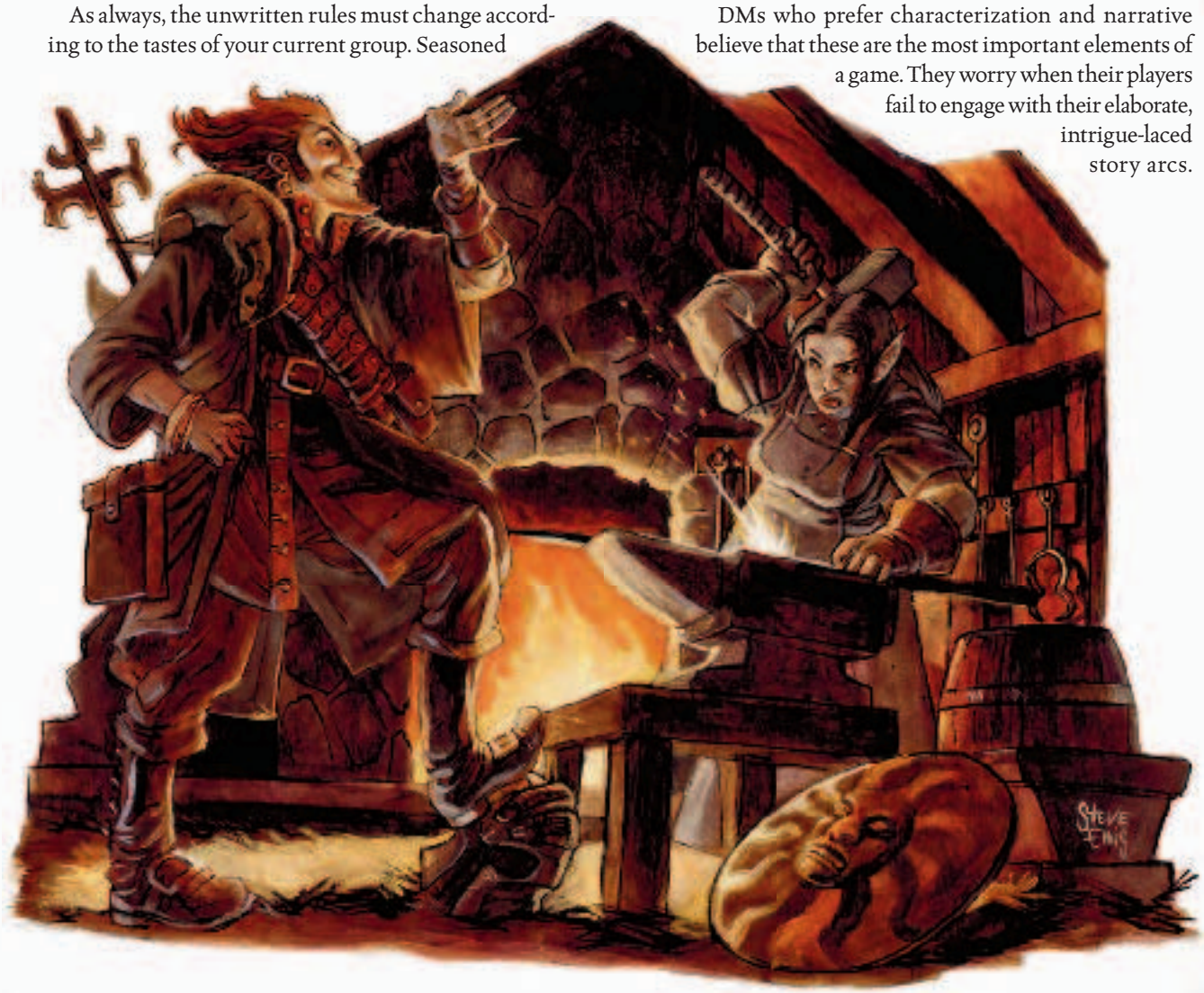
As always, the unwritten rules must change according to the tastes of your current group. Seasoned nitpickers might resist efforts to revise trivial details. A group of players who know a lot about medieval civilization likely places a high priority on historical flavor, and enjoys a level of detail that would revolt or anesthetize a group of action-loving dungeon-raiders. In such a case, your focus on historical reality will be a source of fun, not an obstacle to it.

PLAY STYLES

"Make the game fun for your players and yourself" might be a simple statement, but it isn't self-evident. Many DMs, including experienced ones, believe in an unwritten set of rules for "good roleplaying." They worry that they're failing as DMs if they aren't gently nudging, if not outright shoving, their players toward an abstract pinnacle of quality gaming.

Not coincidentally, DMs who believe in an objective set of rules for good roleplaying generally fixate on a set of standards that match their personal tastes.

DMs who prefer characterization and narrative believe that these are the most important elements of a game. They worry when their players fail to engage with their elaborate, intrigue-laced story arcs.



Campaign building takes hard work, but it can also be fun

Illus. by S. Ellis

DMs who love skirmish tactics might tear their hair out when their players wander with glazed eyes away from their fondly detailed battlemats. History buffs cringe as their players make anachronistic references and give their characters names such as "Biff McNasty." In none of these cases are the players playing the game incorrectly. Dungeons & Dragons can be enjoyed in these and many other ways.

Every group's ideal style differs according to its makeup. It changes over time as players drop in and out, and as each player's interests evolve.

Even the same group of people will want different elements in their game from week to week. Outside factors such as mood and energy level often require adjustments in play. If one of your key players has just come from a frustrating student council proceeding or an exhausting day of meetings at work, you might need to scuttle your plans for an evening of tense political drama and steer the PCs toward last-minute, cathartic orc-bashing.

KNOW YOUR PLAYERS

Knowing what your players want is a matter of simple observation. When the room pops to life—when players start talking in an animated manner, when everyone is trying to get in on the action, when they lean forward in their chairs and their gestures become larger, you've hit on something.

These moments, when the game catches fire, offer a bit of a challenge, because these are the times when your attention is most in demand. You need to keep the players' excitement stoked. You also need to play your role as subtle traffic cop, directing the proceedings so that everyone gets a chance to contribute in a reasonable, understandable order. Without killing the moment by stopping to analyze it, take note of what you've done to get the players going. See who seems most interested—and who's tuning out. Most DMs already do this, although usually not consciously.

POSTGAME ANALYSIS

After a game, when the players have gone home but the session is still fresh in your mind, stop to jot down a few notes. Below are examples of two simple charts you can use to focus your thoughts.

On the first chart, under the heading Highlights, list the session's stand-out sequences. One or two highlights is plenty, but if you have a long session with lots of key moments, add them all to the mix. For each highlight, under the Key Players heading, note the players who took a leading role or who seemed to visibly enjoy themselves. If every player in the group took enthusiastic part in a scene, congratulate yourself and list them all.

For each highlight and each player, under the heading Payoff, jot down a few words expressing what the player seemed to like about the scene.

Highlights	Key Players	Payoff
Shopping expedition	Margie	Loves bargaining; loves magic items.
	Ken	Got to talk about his character's back story with blacksmith.
Kobold fight	Margie	Got to use her new magic items.
	Russell	Kicked kobold booty.
	Janie	Freaked out by hissing noises and creepy atmosphere.
Rescue of princess	George	Got to be heroic and act like a paladin. Killed the dragon. His high AC paid off.
	Ken	Got to interact with princess.
	Steve	Got to sneak up on dragon.
	Russell	Scored good hits against dragon.

DECODING THE CHARACTER SHEET

Character sheets provide a wealth of clues to help you decipher your players' desires. They function much like order sheets, telling you what kinds of situations the players want their PCs involved in. Players select their abilities hoping to use them in play. To make them happy, create encounters that make this possible.

A player who gives her fighter straightforward combat abilities wants to kick butt. She might also just be a casual player looking for the easiest PC to play. A player who plots out a full twenty levels of character advancement before the character's first session, or who maximizes the character's ability to deal damage at each level, is probably a power accumulator. Explorer types tend to favor rogues, bards, and rangers, gravitating toward social and observational skills. Maxed-out stealth skills suggest a specialist player, as do more exotic character classes, such as paladin or monk. Specialists also often play psionic characters. An unusual character concept with less optimized abilities points to an outlier.

A character sheet that comes complete with a complicated narrative tells you that you have a player who focuses on story or roleplaying. If this narrative is full of threads you can easily weave into your campaign, the player is probably story-focused. If it dwells instead on the character's emotional state and behavior, you've got a player asking you to supply some high drama.

Most players' character sheets will feature more than one of these clues. Few players are completely one-dimensional, instead displaying several traits in different proportions. Try to find overlap where you can, and plan your sessions accordingly. If three of your four players show stealthy character preferences, you probably want to plan for more specialist adventures. If all four characters are also optimized for combat, be prepared to run several fights each session.

The second type of chart is for recording moments (if any) when the action bogged down and a player or two grew bored or irritated. Identify the scene under the Weak Points heading, list the players who were affected, and make a note under the Problem heading that summarizes the reason for the difficulty and perhaps mentions a solution. Don't feel as though you must come up with a weak point for a session that went well for the duration.

Weak Points	Key Players	Problem
Puzzle hall	Everybody, but especially Russ and Ken	Puzzle too hard; maybe should have supplied diagram of room
Portcullis trap	Margie	Got bored when problem couldn't be solved by magic items

Once you've completed a number of these session reviews, you can get some valuable information by reordering the results in a master list for each player. By reviewing the sheets, you get a sense of the situations that hook your players' attention, and those that leave them cold.

PLAYER TRAITS AND INCENTIVES

By becoming aware of the particular emotional impulses that give your players a sense of reward, you can pinpoint the techniques you need to use to make your game more fun. Take your notes on your players' traits—either the detailed results of a series of Session Review Charts, or informal notes from memory. You are now going to translate these into the incentives you can use to keep your players on the edges of their seats.

Any element that increases a player's involvement in your campaign can be an incentive. The term is borrowed from the business world, where it's used to describe any element of a corporate environment that motivates an employee to participate in the company culture (and thereby increase her productivity).

The D&D game offers a number of powerful, built-in incentives. Conveniently for the harried DM, most players respond to more than one. Identifying one, two, or even three traits for each player will help you determine the best mix of incentives to incorporate into each game session.

Accumulating Cool Powers

One of the game's central incentives, the pursuit of ever-mightier powers, is also the easiest to put into play because the accumulation of experience is central to the D&D game. Powers can be anything that increases a PC's effectiveness, from increased attributes to feats to spells to magic items.

Almost all players enjoy adding these goodies to their character sheets. They plan ahead, carefully weighing their options, deciding what they will pick next. New abilities are a gift that keeps on giving: Players feel a sense of reward when they gain experience points. They get the sense of reward all over again when the experience points garner them new abilities. When they actually get to use their abilities in a game situation? You guessed it—they experience that sense of reward again.

This incentive appeals to one of the most reliable human motivators: ambition. The instinct to collect valuables has been hardwired into the human brain since *Homo sapiens* first roamed the grasslands searching for nuts, berries, and the occasional tasty mastodon. Throughout history people have been awarded status according to the desirability of their possessions. Players who love to pump up their characters are simply taking this principle and translating it into game terms.

Because pumping up is so straightforward and popular, some DMs deride it. But there's nothing inherently wrong with seeking more power for your character. Do *Monopoly*™ players feel guilty about putting hotels on Park Place? Of course not.

As a DM, realize that "power gamers" are your ally because motivating them is straightforward. Any encounter offering experience points contains a rock-steady incentive to draw them in. Almost any scene you devise to appeal to any other player's taste can also be made into a power gamer's delight by dangling an alluring treasure, a generous XP reward, or a coveted magic item.

More so than other kinds of players, power gamers can be self-entertaining. They can derive great enjoyment from D&D even when they're not at the gaming table. They're dreaming up future variations on their character sheets and poring over supplements looking for new options.

All that time mastering the nuances of his character means that a power gamer might know the rules concerning his own abilities better than you do. A player who has this trait won't be shy about expressing his opinion about how the rules ought to work. Don't look for ways to say no to him—find ways to say yes. Create encounters where he's meant to gain new powers and show off his current abilities. As long as you make him work for his power-ups, there's no problem in doling them out.

Though most DMs think of power accumulators as those players who seek out the abilities that give them the biggest bang for the smallest cost, this isn't necessarily the case. Players whose characters methodically acquire the requirements for a prestige class for storytelling reasons can be just as focused in pursuing their goals, so they are just as easy to motivate with another batch of experience points.

Kicking Butt

Our daily lives often make us feel powerless. We have our regular routines, and we are forced to confront an endless array of demoralizing annoyances. D&D allows us to forget the indignities of our daily lives and exercise

the simplest, most primal fantasy of vented frustration: laying a suspenseful, fast-paced thrashing on a horde of deserving bad guys.

This incentive gets the blood pumping. It makes players feel powerful and in control. Combat fosters the game's biggest sense of jeopardy; never are the PCs at greater risk for more sustained periods than when the fighting starts.

Understand that players who have this trait come to the table specifically for this heady mix of feelings. You don't have to convince them to get as excited about other aspects of the game to consider yourself a good DM. If you and your group love skirmishes and want to run them all night long, you are playing the game as well as anybody else.

Some combat fans are dedicated rules crunchers who comb the *Player's Handbook* and other supplements for the perfect combinations of weapons, feats, and maneuvers. Other players just want the simplest character sheets possible, so they can get to the bashing right away.

At first glance, butt kickers are at least as easy to please as power gamers. Players who have this trait tend to stay happy if you keep the enemies coming. However, supplying lots of fights is no substitute for running battles that are truly exciting. As you run combats, keep in mind the excitement and sense of vicarious mastery fight lovers are looking for. Make the scene come alive. Supply a bone-crunching description when a player, especially a combat fan, dishes out a particularly mighty blow. Keep the focus on the characters engaged in the fight, and not just on the dice rolling on the table in front of you.

The challenge in dealing with action-oriented players is keeping their attention between battles. If you let them go too long without a good scrap, they might find one you weren't planning on. Tavern fights are always a popular choice for bored smiters of evil. They might surprise you by attacking NPCs who were supposed to provide them with resources or information, or by launching sudden frontal assaults on superior foes.

This syndrome is easily cured: Always have a quick, fun battle in your back pocket—villains ready to kick down the door and attack—for times when the fight fans get restless.

Illus. by S. Ellis

Brilliant planning lays the groundwork for victory on the field

Brilliant Planning

Not all diehard combat enthusiasts long to leap heedlessly into melee. Some hope to be rewarded for clever, careful play, in which the group gains maximum advantage while exposing itself to minimum risk. These brilliant planners might be historical or military buffs, able to discourse at length on real-world combat tactics. Players who have this trait might simply be cautious by nature. Some gamers have been trained to play in this style by previous DMs, whose adversarial styles relentlessly punished each tiny PC mistake.

Brilliant planners have fun working out their plans, coordinating them with the other players, and then executing them perfectly. Though these players don't want easy victories, they're perfectly happy to win in an anticlimactic rout, where the PCs' use of terrain, tactics, spells, and abilities takes out the foe in a few decisive blows. If you deliberately circumvent a brilliant plan to make the resulting fight more action-packed, these players might feel cheated.

Give these players a chance to shine by creating the occasional set-piece encounter in which their strategic skills can take center stage. Have the group storm a fortress, citadel, or urban environment. Give the PCs a way to secure accurate maps of the area to be invaded. They might accomplish this goal through scouting, espionage, magic, or some other means—perhaps one that gives another player time in the spotlight before the brilliant planner takes command. As you prepare the encounter, allow for at least one clever strategy that, if followed, gives the group a significant chance of decisive, one-sided victory. In play, while the brilliant planners brilliantly plan, you can always modify your notes so that any especially fun and creative scheme the planner dreams up also has a chance of working.

Provide players who have this trait with specific strategic goals, and create special group XP awards if the goals are attained. Hostage rescue is always an appropriately heroic activity. For example, the PCs might be assigned to rescue a merchant and her retinue from bandits. You can award an XP bonus for each innocent left unscathed at the raid's end.

Ingenious plans, when successful, confront you with the dilemma of anticlimax. If a big chunk of game time culminates in a quick victory, the brilliant planners are delighted, but other players might wonder what all the fuss was about. Remedy this problem by playing up the positive consequences of the quick victory. Have the local authorities throw a victory banquet for the PCs. Have grateful citizens shower them in rose petals. Award medals—or, better yet, prestigious magic items. Allow interaction-oriented PCs chances to make important contacts with influential NPCs. Use oracles and prophecies to show story enthusiasts how they changed the course of history.

Puzzle Solving

Another key pleasure of the D&D game is the chance to solve puzzles and mysteries. The incentive of puzzle solving lies not only in the opportunity to demonstrate one's cleverness, but also in our deeply rooted impulse to make patterns out of apparent randomness, to bring order to chaos. The world around the players might seem inexplicable and out of control, but when faced with a puzzle encounter, they know that a solution exists, if they're smart and determined enough to find it.

A good puzzle or mystery also plays off a fundamental dynamic of fictional entertainment, in which frustration slowly builds and is then overcome and released. For many players, the more they wrack their brains trying to work out a riddle or identify the key to a spatial puzzle, the more they want to succeed. When they do figure it out, their sense of triumph is proportional to the frustration they suffered earlier.

Puzzle solvers are especially gratified by these two impulses. Concrete thinkers are drawn to simple abstract puzzles, including memory tests, word scrambles, riddles, and pattern identification exercises. They might also like trial-and-error puzzles, such as a group of levers that must be pulled in a particular sequence to open a doorway. Generally, the more real brainpower involved in completing a puzzle, as opposed to mindless systematic effort, the happier a classic puzzle solver will be.

The puzzle type favored by more intuitive thinkers is the mystery or investigation, where interpersonal skills such as diplomacy, interrogation, and insight into personal motives come into play. While an abstract puzzle is typically confined to a single encounter, a mystery can take one or more sessions to solve, and generally takes place in a city or town. Common investigation types include the identification of murderers or other criminals, and discovering the location of a villain's hideout. Espionage scenarios, in which the PCs must purloin maps or documents, or surreptitiously capture enemy operatives, for example, offer a mix of elements appealing to both the mystery fan and the brilliant planner.

Abstract puzzles provide a definite challenge to the DM, since some players tend to hate them. Frustration levels are highly variable from one person to the next. One player might grow bored with a puzzle and want to abandon it after a few minutes of trying, while a true puzzle fanatic regards that same time period as one of mounting excitement. Frustration level corresponds to one's talent for puzzles: Players who aren't good at them give up quickly.

Satisfying both puzzle fans and antipuzzle players in the same group can be tough. Try to create situations where non-puzzlers have something to do while the enthusiasts furrow their brows. A dungeon room featuring a puzzle might also have an area to search or an occupant to question.

Place puzzles in areas of the dungeon the party can easily return to, so that the puzzlers can think about them as exploration continues, returning to them when a solution occurs.

If the group runs across a puzzle encounter at a suitable time, call for a break. The puzzle solvers can work away while their comrades focus on snacks and chatter.

Session-long mysteries are easier to balance with other hooks. You can fold fights, tactical situations, drama, travelogue, and other elements into the adventure structure, so that other players get their key moments while the investigation fans gather clues. Story-oriented players are inherently satisfied by the structured nature of a mystery scenario.

Mystery adventures pose their own specific challenges, and can provoke as much frustration as any riddle or trial-and-error test.

For both types of puzzle solver, your main diffuclty is to find puzzles and mysteries challenging enough to produce a sense of gratification when solved, but not so hard that they can't be overcome. It is difficult to strike a balance even when you know your players well. A puzzle that is a cinch for one player might stump another.

Accept that you will occasionally strike the wrong balance. Err on the easy side; a puzzle that gets solved too quickly feels like a nonevent, but a puzzle that stops the session dead is far worse.

Build in fail-safes so that the session can continue if the solution to a particular puzzle remains elusive. Avoid placing puzzles in bottleneck points—if the PCs must solve a puzzle to get through a door, see to it that they have plenty of opportunities for other encounters if they don't open it. None of the encounters on the other side of the puzzle door should be necessary for the adventure's successful completion.

A similar principle applies to mysteries, where a block in the chain of information can be as much of an obstruction as a physical one in a dungeon complex. Some adventures, for example, provide only one way for the PCs to find any given clue. If the PCs take some action that stops them from finding the tidbit of information they need to move forward, the adventure stops cold.

Playing a Favorite Role

Many players like to play the same type of character over and over. The attitude and trappings of that character provide a highly specific incentive that the player finds endlessly rewarding.

Ninjas and assassins are perhaps the most common specialty, with bards and other performer types coming in a close second. Players who like particular animals and want to play characters who either have these creatures as pets or are from anthropomorphic races also fit into this category. Other specialist players might prod you to let them play a winged or flying PC.

Often a player's favorite role is a version of a classic character from fiction, comics, TV, or the movies. If you've been playing for long, you have doubtless already run into your share of suspiciously familiar white wizards, sinewy barbarians, or pale-complexioned fighter-sorcerers, as well as a range of other characters translated from other genres into fantasy terms. Drizzt Do'Urden, a character from the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, has spawned a legion of PC drow characters over the years.

Some self-typecasting players fixate on extreme quirks unique to themselves. They might always play hotheaded philosophers, morose bandits, dumb guys, antisocial spellcasters, or some other specific combination of game statistics and personality type.

Some DMs believe that players who create endless variations on the same basic PC are bad roleplayers. According to this theory, players are supposed to be like actors, able to take on a wide range of roles. Indeed, it might get frustrating at times to keep coming up with fresh encounters to engage a player who always plays the same basic PC. Since D&D is about having fun, and players who typecast themselves clearly find it reassuring or profoundly satisfying to do so, the DM should be ready to meet the challenges involved in entertaining players who have this trait.

The most obvious types, though, offer some equally obvious answers. For instance, the ninja plays to the desire to harmlessly cross dangerous boundaries, to be both deadly

Illus. by R. Gallegos

A winged elf might be a favorite role for one of the players in your campaign

THE INDISCRIMINATE THIEF

In many beginning groups, the first taste of conflict between PCs—and their players—occurs when a rogue's player decides to have a little fun on the side by having his character steal from the rest of the party. Inevitably, the rogue gets caught, leaving the other PCs to figure out how to stop her from doing it again. This scenario can be entertaining, provided that the players regard the rogue's behavior as harmless mischief. Some players, however, want their characters to respond logically to the problem, by kicking the rogue out of the group, or worse. The players would respond harshly, after all, if an NPC rogue tried to rob them. Players who get emotionally attached to their characters' possessions might take it personally, leading to an unpleasant argument.

Rogues who habitually rob their friends might be acting as deliberate spoilsports. If so, you need to deal with them as you would any incorrigibly selfish player (see Selfishness, page 36).

More likely, though, party-robbers are telling you that they want more chances to use their rogue skills and abilities. They have ranks in Sleight of Hand, for example, and want a chance to use the skill. The group might want that character to spend her time jimmying locks and disarming traps, but her player didn't choose a rogue character in the hope of becoming a glorified locksmith. She wants her character to be sneaky, clever, and felonious!

Solve the problem by creating opportunities for rogue players to act roguishly. Design city scenes in which a little underhanded activity furthers the plot. Devise a combat encounter in which the rogue can sway the outcome by relieving a spellcaster of a powerful staff or other item. Add an encounter with unsympathetic rival adventurers whose leader has a set of dungeon keys swinging from his belt.

and subtle. This stereotype offers a fantasy of quiet superiority. Its fans hope for chances to sneak around and strike from the shadows. In another situation, someone who always plays kindly wizards wants the occasional chance to sit down, smoke some pipeweed, and dispense avuncular advice to wide-eyed NPCs.

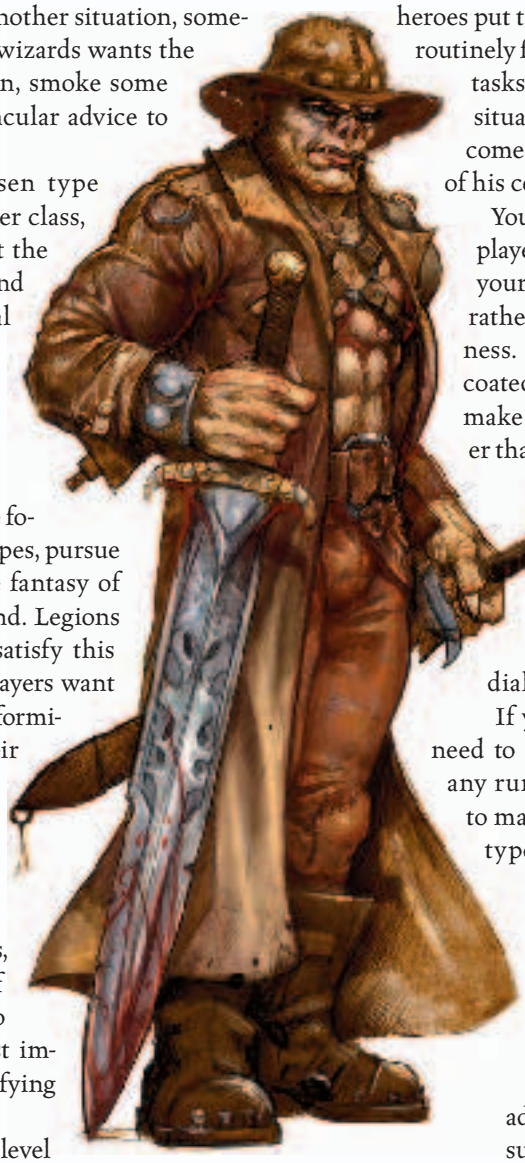
The closer a player's chosen type hews to a preexisting character class, the easier your job is. Look at the character's signature abilities and make sure they play a pivotal role in the adventure you're running. If not, modify the adventure accordingly.

Supercoolness

Many players, especially those focused on particular favorite types, pursue an additional incentive—the fantasy of being icy cool and in command. Legions of movie heroes vicariously satisfy this same desire. The supercool players want to feel as masterful, in control, formidable, and intimidating as their fictional models.

This emotional payoff is tough to sustain in a game. When movie characters fail, it's usually to make the audience members feel a sense of loss, which heightens their sense of vicarious victory when the hero ultimately comes back against impossible odds to mete out satisfying justice against the bad guys.

D&D characters, even high-level ones, fail more frequently than their counterparts from fiction and movies. Roleplaying games create suspense by allowing for the possibility of fatal, even disastrous, failure whenever the heroes put themselves at risk. D&D characters also routinely fail at run-of-the-mill, consequence-free tasks when players roll poorly. When such a situation arises, the game might turn into a comedy of errors, robbing the typecast player of his coolness factor.



This half-orc always remains cool in the face of danger

You can't—and shouldn't—shield the type-player from failure, but you can see to it that your descriptions of her failures enhance, rather than detract from, her sense of coolness. When she's stuck deep in a dungeon, coated in blood and slime, do your best to make the details seem tough and gritty, rather than funny and humiliating. Ask yourself how the scene would play out if it were an action movie sequence with Sean Connery, Viggo Mortensen, or Michelle Yeoh playing the PC's part. If you get laughs from the rest of the group, dial it back.

If your group includes a class clown, you need to keep an eye on the tone, squelching any running commentary when it threatens to make the specialist's treasured character type appear buffoonish or undignified.

When supercool characters succeed, especially after a string of failures, play up the description to emphasize their extraordinary coolness. Critical hits provide excellent opportunities for showcase descriptions, as do death blows.

Whenever possible, NPCs who are not adversaries should display their awe for a supercool character. Unless the PC has an above-average Charisma score and reasonable social skills, he gains no particular

THE FORBIDDING PALADIN

Paladins are popular among some specialist players because the class's combination of useful abilities and restrictive moral code gives players of paladin characters considerable social power within the group. Typically, the presence of this type of character sets up a dynamic in which the other PCs must petition the paladin for permission to carry out any slightly sneaky plans they might make. All character interactions in your group come to revolve around the paladin. The rest of the players must either continually bend to his will or conspire behind his back. Either way, he becomes the center of attention. A feedback loop can occur as the other players, resentful of the paladin's place in the spotlight, work even harder to thwart and frustrate him—thereby giving him even more attention and influence.

If your group is new and has not experienced this syndrome before, let it play out for a while. It serves as a useful set of training wheels for those players interested in exploring their character's emotions and motivations. Once the dynamic grows tiresome (which might happen quickly with an experienced group), expert handling on your part is required. Use discussion-shaping techniques (see Communication Is Key, page 26) to truncate any verbal sniping between the paladin's player and the rest of the group. Bring disputes to a head as soon as possible. By skipping to the bottom line, you might be able to drain conflicts of their emotional charge, so that both the paladin and his adversaries move on to other sources of emotional satisfaction within your game.

Players who love paladins might be budding psychodramatists (see Psychodrama, page 14).

Illus. by M. Cotie

game benefit from this recognition of his coolness. It's entirely possible to have high regard for someone without wanting to help him.

Story

Most neophyte groups are best served by simple, straightforward dungeon bashing. However, a certain percentage of players, not long after they grasp the roleplaying concept, want more than a series of doors behind which monsters and treasures can be found. They find their greatest sense of excitement in D&D's narrative aspects. For these players, the game is like a movie or television show, but one in which they're taking part in the story.

Players who have this trait are not content with one incentive: They look to a D&D game for the full gamut of emotions you feel in a compelling narrative, from humor to horror, from suspense to celebration. Story-oriented players want plot threads and continuing characters. They want to take part in exciting events that unfold from simple beginnings, become gradually more involved and compelling, and then develop into exciting climaxes—preferably at the end of an evening, just like a night at the movies.

Players drawn by this incentive are simultaneously easy and difficult to please. They are self-starters who provide material for you to work with and take your game in surprising new directions. To make full use of their contributions, though, requires a flair for improvisation. If such a player makes a sudden decision for his character that takes your campaign story in an unexpected direction (which is not uncommon with players of this sort), this situation can be tough to adjust to, especially if you're more comfortable with carefully prepared adventures than with making the story up as you go along.

Story-oriented players typically supply you with a detailed background for their characters, which includes one or more plot devices for you to pick up on. Go through the back story with a highlighter and single out the passages that could serve as plot springboards. Staple plot devices include missing relatives, readymade conflicts with preexisting enemies, weapons with exotic histories, and deep, dark secrets the character hopes never to see revealed. Each implies a plot development the character wants either to bring about or to prevent.

In a mixed group, you can keep story-oriented players happy with a touch of plot between dungeon encounters. With groups featuring a player who has this trait, you can use the convention that plot unfolds in town and game elements occur in the dungeon. In this model, the players maintain a home base in a community that is large enough to supply them with equipment, money-changing services, and a bustling exchange market in magic items, and is also a bubbling pot of political upheaval, romantic intrigue, and eerie mysteries. When the characters leave the dungeon to heal their wounds and sell their excess loot, the story fans can go off to interact with NPCs and further any ongoing plot threads. After allowing these to advance for a while, you can let the action fans and brilliant planners tug the group back to the dungeon again, or draw them into melees and strategy arising from the urban storyline.

If your entire group prefers deep-immersive storytelling, you won't just weave in a bit of narrative for your story-loving player—instead, you will have to balance the various plot threads that interest each participant.

Psychodrama

Players can be drawn to D&D's roleplaying aspect without especially caring about taking part in a wider story. Their incentive is psychodrama. These players want to explore the psychology of their characters from the inside out. Seekers of psychodrama might supply you with detailed written backgrounds on their PCs, focused primarily on their emotions, behavior, and perceptions. Though psychodrama players might create any type of character, they generally favor PCs who exhibit dark moods and extreme

CASE STUDY: FROM SPRINGBOARD TO STORY

Heather is a story-oriented player who provides you with a page of background information on her character, Julian. As you read through it, you highlight a number of promising plot devices, but the one that sparks an immediate idea is the bit that describes Julian as an exile from the neighboring kingdom of Tantara. According to Heather's description, Julian was wrongfully convicted of sedition against his brother, Tantara's cruel ruler.

You have already decided that your campaign's home base will be the city-state of Kish, a rich but often conquered trading port that sits inconveniently at a crossroads between three powerful nations. (Another of your reliable players is a brilliant planner and military buff, and you want to lay the groundwork for skirmishes and maybe even an invasion.)

Combining this basic background idea with Heather's background, you decide that Kish is home to a beleaguered ethnic group. These people are the descendants of Tantarans who put down roots in the city when their country occupied Kish. They want Tantara to invade Kish again, restoring them to their old positions of power.

Turning this player's choice from background into a story, you decide that Naxo, the leader of the Tantaran minority, will approach Julian and regale him with accounts of their oppression.

This decision gives you at least two possible directions to go in, depending on how Heather reacts. She can try to help the Tantarans in the city, putting her at odds with its leadership. Once this scenario plays out, you can pull a switcheroo—Naxo could try to betray Julian to his brother, hoping to curry favor for an invasion.

From this simple line in Heather's character description, you have added detail to your setting, tailored to draw your PC into it. You also have set up a number of situations you can advance a bit at a time between dungeon expeditions.

behavior. A character description featuring a traumatic pivotal event that shapes the character's actions is a sure sign of a dramatist.

These players want you to present them with difficult choices that they can then examine from their PCs' intense point of view. No matter how inconvenient it might be for the group, they won't take any action that violates their sense of the characters' inner lives. They identify strongly with their characters while at the same time viewing D&D as primarily a creative pastime. Like brilliant planners, they hate to be reminded that the game is a fictional construct. These players want to believe in the proceedings from their character's point of view. They might therefore strongly resist any suggestions that they alter their character portrayals to achieve a game objective or move the story along. To do so is to attack their sense of creative control.

In fact, challenges from other players, which psychodramatists can respond to by asserting the integrity of their characterizations, might serve to confirm their sense of artistic integrity. In this tricky dynamic, dramatists get a sense of reward when they thwart or refuse the rest of the group. Your challenge as a DM is to provide players who have this trait with other reward moments so they don't have to create them at the group's expense.

As with any other incentive, you have to respect dramatists' desires as valid and give them a fair share of gratification. Identify the sorts of scenes that would best highlight the character, and satisfy the dramatist's urge to refuse. Create NPCs the dramatists will conflict with so they don't have to use the other PCs as foils for their inner struggles. Whenever possible, place these signature moments early in the session, defusing a player's building urge for moments of defining conflict.

Some drama-seekers use their roleplaying characters to indirectly explore their own emotional issues. If handled lightly, this approach can be harmlessly fun and cathartic. Pitfalls abound when a hidden real-world emotional agenda fuels a player's choices, however. In such cases, you need a strong sense of the dramatists' personal boundaries, as well as those of the other players. If your other players expect an evening of escapist entertainment, they probably don't want to join your drama-seeker on a journey to plumb the depths of emotion.

When a player's dramatic explorations get too heavy for the rest of the group, you need to muster your sharpest people skills. If strong feelings are at play and you're not sure why, it's often best to back off. Call a break. Send the game in another direction until the player can separate his personal issues from the game.

D&D is an infinitely customizable vehicle for wish fulfillment, but it shouldn't be used as therapy by people in serious need of it. As DM, it is never your place to attempt to solve your players' real-life problems, or to suggest that they seek help. If you realize you're about to say something from the DM's chair that goes beyond the normal bounds of your friendship with the player, it's time for you to take a break.

Irresponsibility

Popular culture has always provided a harmless outlet for fantasies of rebellion and general irresponsibility. Viewers love outlaws and rebels, whether they're gangsters, gunslingers, or frat boys fighting for their right to party. In real life, people must obey countless rules every day, from the necessary to the petty and frustrating. Although most people don't really want to be crooks and outlaws, and most would hate to live next to a fraternity house, many people fantasize about being able to flout authority and live by their own rules. The most popular heroes from the world of entertainment are not irreproachable

CASE STUDY: ADDING DRAMA

Kirk loves to explore the psychology of his character, the halfling rogue Hassa. Kirk has established Hassa as a habitual loner who distrusts society. According to his detailed back story, Hassa grew up as an outcast, shunned by the people of his conformist village after his father was falsely hanged for murder. Over the last few sessions, Hassa has reluctantly bonded with the rest of the PCs, a process that has entertained Kirk while occasionally irking the other players. You have decided to take the pressure off them by giving Kirk a chance to highlight this character trait through NPC interactions.

You create a halfling NPC called Eric Treefoot who approaches Hassa when he next shows up in town. You design Treefoot as a foil—a minor character who provides a contrast to a more important one—for Hassa. He's everything that Hassa hates—pushy, compulsively social, chatty, and a staunch upholder of halfling conformity. Treefoot greets Hassa as a long-lost friend and tries to pressure him into joining a new halfling mutual aid society he's establishing in town.

When you play the scene out, Kirk has Hassa shrink from the persistent Treefoot, just as you expected. Kirk is content, because you have given him the chance to play out Hassa's big theme—his outsider's loathing of normal society.

The other players are happy not only because you made the scene entertaining to watch, but because for once they're not the ones struggling to win over Hassa's trust. Afterward, they pat him on the back for giving that snooty old fogey the treatment he deserved. Kirk now has an additional reason for his character to like the PCs. Hassa goes back into the dungeon with them, his thirst for drama momentarily slaked.

You already have plans to bring back Treefoot next session. Maybe he will show up with a gift, or insult Hassa with unwelcome news about the family that disowned him. As you make a list of possibilities, you might find that Treefoot can provide you with material for weeks to come.

boy scouts. They're the antiheroes, vigilantes, mavericks, and troublemakers most people would secretly like to be, if only for an hour or two.

Don't be surprised, then, when your players adopt these role models and become anarchic, outsider heroes. They might fight for the cause of good, but that doesn't mean they want to take orders or live according to the constraints of polite society.

In the real world, medieval society had little place for outsiders. Its very foundation was the careful arrangement of people by hereditary rank. Nobles sometimes enjoyed considerable power to misbehave as long as no one of higher rank bore the brunt of their rebellion. Those people lower on the social scale were quickly squelched when they stepped outside the boundaries of feudal law. A legendary outlaw such as Robin Hood seized the medieval imagination precisely because he did what no one could.

A successful D&D setting, though, should offer the PCs the opportunity to break the rules just like an Errol Flynn character because the genre expectations demand it. Many DMs enforce a logic-based view of crime and punishment, rather than an escapist one. They might be too engaged with notions of historical accuracy, or feel a need to keep their players in check.

Instead, realize that a certain number of your players adopt the fictional personas of D&D characters to play out the same harmless antiauthority fantasies that pop culture promotes on a weekly basis. Don't fight this impulse—satisfy it. If you don't, escapist players will create their own opportunities. They'll bust up taverns when they're supposed to be gleaning clues. They'll brazenly attack villainous authority figures that you expected them to deal with carefully. Bored players might decide to break character to have their PCs engage in pointless vandalism.

Head them off at the pass by building the occasional bar brawl into the plot. Give them lesser authority figures to defy—preferably visibly corrupt ones that even a lawful good character can feel justified in defying. Create situations in which a pyrotechnic destruction of property serves not only the plot but the cause of good.

Few players pursue irresponsibility as their primary incentive, but many, especially the butt-kickers (see page 9) and outliers (see page 17), resort to this sort of behavior when they are bored. Give them a taste of action on your terms, in encounters that won't derail your adventure or the imaginary realism of your world.

Setting Exploration

Humans have survived and prospered because they are innately curious. They want to know what's over the next horizon, whether that plant is edible, and whether that clay jar contains a stack of gold pieces or a snake.

Any dungeon raid is an exercise in exploration, from the creation of a map to the opening of mysterious doors to see what's on the other side. Like historical explorers, most adventurers don't think their job is done until the site in question is scoured of every last bit of loot.

Some players, however, get their greatest enjoyment from exploration activities. They volunteer for dungeon-mapping duty and linger in fascination over large-scale maps you hand out. Their PCs chomp at the bit to head off to the far corners of your world.

Explorers are easy to please—all you have to do is stock the world with

Illus. by W. Reynolds

When characters act irresponsibly, it's easy for a brawl to break out

interesting places and other elements for them to discover. They don't necessarily need a lot of drama or action—give them a library to putter around in, or a new culture with strange customs to learn about, and they're hooked. Their restlessness makes them reliable advancers of the plot. A willingness to blunder into unknown situations always helps keep a game moving.

However, explorers' wanderlust can inspire them to move on from a carefully developed environment you have stocked with plots and characters meant to sustain months of play. If you want to keep the party tied to a home base, provide enough dark and exotic corners to keep the explorer busy.

Since curiosity is your friend, take care not to punish it. Let explorers get into interesting trouble, but nothing so deadly that the group can't overcome the hazards.

Engage your explorer characters by providing attractive maps of your world. If you're not a cartographer, you can rely on published maps or find nice maps on the Web. Investigate the world of mapping software; a number of powerful programs make it easy to create visually stunning dungeon and overland images.

Think of explorer players as tourists who like to safely visit nonexistent lands. Fill your world with atmosphere. Check out real-world books by top travel authors such as Jan Morris, Tim Cahill, or Redmond O'Hanlon; use them as inspirations for arresting descriptions of your world. Describing everything in a travel writer's exquisite detail would be mentally exhausting, but a few set-piece descriptions per session should capture your explorers' imaginations. Remember to engage all the senses by referring to sounds, smells, tastes, and climate as well as the sights of your setting.

Explorer characters might encounter unique creatures like this one

The Outlier

The D&D game assumes a high degree of group cohesion, in which a team equipped with complementary talents bands together to slay monsters, gather treasure, and gain XP. Both the rules and the typical activities involved in adventuring reinforce group unity. Some players, though, get their emotional charge by subverting this dynamic. These players have the outlier trait. They revel in being different and playing by their own rules. In short, they love to play oddballs.

Outliers are fairly easy to spot from their character sheets. They enjoy trying out weird character concepts and strange mixtures of abilities. Unlike power accumulators, who try to find the most useful combination of powers, outliers experiment in the other direction, hoping to create characters on the cusp of unplayability.

Outliers enjoy playing oddballs for the same reason that some people embrace eccentricity in real life. By rejecting the rules that most people follow, they define success on their own terms—terms they can more easily meet. They enjoy the confusion and consternation they cause in others, taking it as positive reinforcement. Some players who have this trait create incompetent or mediocre characters to immunize themselves from the emotional consequences of failure. Because they set themselves up to fail during character creation, setbacks don't sting so much. Failures are not only expected—they become victories, according to the outlier's self-defined, contrarian criteria.

Since much of the outlier's fun comes from upending the group's pursuit of its goals, the outlier's activities can sow seeds of frustration among the rest of the players. Most outliers are one step ahead of you on this score, employing a defense mechanism that keeps the other PCs from stuffing the outliers' characters down the nearest pit trap. They bring the brunt of their failures on themselves, ensuring that they suffer enough self-directed ill

Illus. by R. Mimura

Illus. by R. Spencer

Outlier characters are likely to find themselves alone in perilous situations

consequences to make any additional punishment redundant. By playing their failures for laughs, outliers postpone confrontations over their antics. Most people respond to slapstick humor because they're pleased to only be observers of the mayhem. Few people don't enjoy seeing someone in a worse spot than they are in, especially if the person in trouble brought it on himself.

The mood will sour if the outlier's goofball decisions lead to an outcome in which the party suffers a significant loss, such as a humiliating defeat in a climactic encounter or the death of another player's character. Brilliant planners are particularly likely to lose their cool in the face of deliberate failure. Dramatists dislike outliers because they can't find a good in-character reason to trust them.

Head off potential confrontations by supplying encounters, preferably early in each session, that give an outlier chances to amusingly sabotage his own character. Create scenes in which the PC can get captured, caught in traps, outsmarted by townsfolk, dumped in the mud, or otherwise suffer comic humiliation. Design these encounters so that the outlier's antics can't bring catastrophe down on the rest of the party. Even better, devise encounters in which the class clown's comeuppance benefits other PCs—preferably those least amused by them.

The problem with being an eccentric is that doing so becomes tedious when everyone around you acts likewise. If your entire group consists of oddballs, you might need to run a completely silly minicampaign to get it out of your players' systems. However, a profusion of oddballs in your game might point to a style imbalance on your part. If the players find success in your campaign impossibly difficult, they might fall back on eccentricity as a coping mechanism. You might need to ease up on the difficulty of encounters or the harshness of your setting to get them to settle back into more usual approaches.

Clowning tends to get out of hand when players get bored. When it becomes an epidemic, especially among players who are usually more focused, you're likely

overlooking the players' true desires. Perform a new review of their tastes and make adjustments to your campaign to better meet them.

Not all outlier PCs are comic loonies. A player who creates a scholarly noncombatant type in a battle-heavy campaign is also trying to tell you something by opting out of your game's standard activities. Others might be story- or drama-driven players who want you to facilitate their experimentation with hard-to-play PCs.

Lurker

As you observe the tastes of your players, don't be surprised if you can't pin down a particular player's traits. You look back on the night's gaming and can't think of a single in-game moment in which she asserted herself or even showed signs of having a good time. Yet she returns, week after week, rolling dice when prompted, rarely drawing attention and never taking center stage.

Though it's possible that this player has a rare incentive you just haven't discovered yet, it's more likely she's a lurker. This term originated in Internet culture, where it refers to someone who reads a forum or a mailing list without contributing to it.

Players don't differ only in their tastes; degree of commitment also varies. Lurkers show up and participate to a degree, but might not learn many of the rules, take part in discussions, speak in character, remember campaign details from week to week, or otherwise distinguish themselves as players. At times you might forget the lurkers are even there—which is fine with them. They might attend your games chiefly because the rest of their friends are there. If so, they might devote only partial attention to game events, instead choosing to read, play on their laptops, or sketch in a sketchbook. Lurkers might also be extremely shy folks who have a perfectly fine time so long as you never push them to take a more active role or to provide you with specific feedback.

Even inattentive lurkers can be assets to your group. They might fill out the party by playing a necessary character class no one else is interested in. Lurkers often take the role of "second chair," playing a class that is useful to duplicate. They might add brute force, additional healing, or extra spells without stealing thunder from players more interested in playing their characters to the hilt.

Don't underestimate the social role of the lurker. Your lurker might be the person who makes sure another player attends, or who drives one or more players to your game. If disputes arise, it's calming to have somebody in the room who doesn't contribute to a tense situation.

If you have one or two such players, do your best to make them feel welcome and comfortable. Sometimes lurkers come out of their shells and blossom into more active players, and you should pay enough attention to them to bring them along if that happens. Mostly, though, the lurkers call for your acceptance. Recognize that it's okay for them to be shy or laid-back—and that you're not failing as a DM by not setting their imaginations on fire.

YOUR DMING STYLE

Running a game requires a great deal of time and energy. The players spend some time on their character sheets as they increase in level between sessions, but most of the burden of prep time is on you. During play, you must maintain focus and concentration for the entire evening, resting only during break time—and even then, you're likely to be called on to answer questions and deal with other in-game issues, when what you need is time to rest your brain.

CASE STUDY: SELF-DEFEAT MADE SAFE

Inika is an outlier player who would rather see Grund, her inquisitive half-orc bard, fail entertainingly than contribute to a group success. She's been doing a good job of playing the class clown and getting away with it so far, but over the past few sessions some of the players have grown steadily less amused by Grund's misadventures. The most visibly annoyed players are Ramon, the group's brilliant planner, and Josie, who would like a more serious atmosphere in which to pursue her character's dark and stormy moods.

This session you plan to run a long-awaited assault on a citadel full of undead. Ramon has been prepping all week to present his tactical plan to the group. Josie is looking forward to her character's confrontation with the main villain, a vampire who happens to be her sister. Left to her own devices, you suspect that Inika will try to inject some unwanted comic relief into the scenario, probably by letting her curiosity get the better of her at a crucial moment.

First, you listen as Ramon details his plan. No fool, he has given Grund an apparently idiotproof job that plays to Inika's tastes as a player. As the assault begins, Grund is to distract the human guards at the outer gates. Ramon figures that even if she messes up, the guards will still be distracted.

Ramon has been clever, but you still want to give Inika a chance to get the clowning out of her system before the big scene begins. By doing so, you can devote your focus to Ramon's plan and Josie's drama during the actual event.

The night before the assault, as the other characters prepare, you give Grund an amusing distraction—a strange, luminous lizard scampers past him while he's on watch outside the PC's inn. Inika decides that Grund's curiosity gets the better of him, as is consistent with her character. As Grund follows the lizard, he faces a series of comic obstacles. He gets himself locked in a cellar, then gets paint dumped on his head, and completes the evening by falling through a skylight into the main hall of a nunnery.

If you were a literal-minded DM, you might punish Grund for acting foolishly. However, Inika enjoys it when her character plays the fool, and you're trying to protect the rest of the party from distractions and ill consequence. As a result, the worst he suffers is embarrassment.

Illus. by V. Rams

Adaptability allows these characters to stay in control in the face of a fiery onslaught

Given the extra work you put in, you might be asking why you need to worry about the players' tastes. Shouldn't you run the game the way you want and let the chips fall where they may? Don't you have your own stylistic preferences? Shouldn't you be able to express them?

Of course, you do have preferences and quirks, just as players do. Those preferences will be strong enough that you will express them whether you try to or not. Even if you take all the advice in this chapter completely to heart, you won't be obliterating your own style. By expanding your bag of tricks and learning to make the game enjoyable for players of all sorts, you'll enormously increase the fun content of your games.

DM styles often correspond in large part to player preferences. You will be better at using certain hooks than others. You might like to run simple fight scenes, in which case you'll find it easy to keep your butt-kickers happy. If you're a tactical enthusiast with a mental database of classic military engagements in your head, pleasing the brilliant planners comes as second nature to you. Budding novelists excel at story and drama. If you prefer to spend the bulk of your prep time on world creation and fondly detailed maps, you will have the explorers coming back for more.

Conversely, there will likely always be a popular element of D&D that you have to strain to deliver. Your eyes might glaze over at the mere mention of advanced skirmish tactics. Maybe you don't have a head for numbers and find it hard to keep track of initiative and Armor Class during a lengthy battle sequence. You might be uncomfortable thinking in character, or find it hard to create vivid sensory detail to satisfy the explorer types.

Don't let your discomfort or a perceived lack in some area get you down. Every DM has a particular set of strengths and weaknesses. You won't be able to please every player equally. No one expects you to.

No matter what their stylistic preferences or sharpest skills are, truly entertaining DMs have a few traits in common. These are discussed below.

Adaptability

Your game doesn't exist without players to play in it. Leave room for their decisions to shape the game. Always be ready to change your plans to suit events as they develop, and to appeal to the specific tastes of your players.

Some people think superbly on their feet. They seem adaptable, but they really don't have to change their ideas at all, because they don't come up with them until the moment they need them. They rely on the input supplied by their players to stimulate their creativity. If anything, they might rely too much on improvisational abilities and fail to prepare when necessary.

Other DMs work better with extensive preparation. Advance thinking can be just as adaptable as on-the-spot decision making. As you prepare your settings, scenes, and encounters, find ways to tailor them to your players' various preferences. Anticipate different player choices and your responses to them. The better you know your players, the easier tailoring adventures becomes.

Always be ready to alter published adventures or source material, just as you would your own creations. To do so, you must know the material thoroughly, as you would if you made the adventure yourself. Then you should change a few elements to mark it as your own territory. Change a shopkeeper to suit one of your favorite funny voices, add a few extra rooms to a dungeon, or alter the description of a cave entrance to suit your local terrain. Next, go through the material, highlighting the bits that the players are likely to interact with in the near future. Find ways to punch it up with your players' favorite hooks. More on this subject can be found in Chapter 2.

A Facilitator, Not a Dictator

Few people enjoy being bossed around or constantly placed in a position of inferiority. For most of us, an ordinary day at work or school already offers enough chances to shut up and follow instructions. In our entertainment, we seek fantasies of freedom and wish fulfillment. No one would go to see an adventure movie in which the hero is constantly abused without ever getting a chance to overcome her tormentors.

Yet some DMs, including quite experienced ones, regard their games as opportunities to exert gleeful power over a group of hapless players. Most of these individuals realize that relentlessly punitive DMing isn't much fun for the players, but they still enjoy (perhaps subconsciously) the occasional power trip. Many good DMs, after minimal prompting, happily reel off anecdotes about the devious tricks they've pulled to force their players into a preferred style of play.

DMing is not about making you feel powerful. A select few players do take delight in an adversarial dynamic in which you ruthlessly punish their characters for their smallest miscalculations, misjudgments, and slips of the tongue. These group members tend to be the brilliant planners and puzzle solvers, who want you to provide them with a tough environment over which they can triumph. However, even these folks want to prevail in the end. They want to be challenged, not pummeled.

For most players, a successful DM is more a detached facilitator than a maniacal, controlling drill sergeant. You need to maintain a certain authority to keep attention focused on the game, but this authority is a tool, not an end in itself. Remember, the goal is for everyone at the table to have as much fun as possible.

A ninja character needs unusual challenges to test her special skills

BALANCING DIFFERING TASTES

The difficulty in balancing different player tastes depends on two factors: the extremity of their preferences and the group's collective willingness to compromise.

Homogenous Groups

Some DMs need make no conscious effort to balance their players' competing desires, because their players don't have any. These groups are all composed of happy monster slayers, story gamers, or some other complementary combination of tastes. If you are such a DM, count your blessings. Through sheer demographic happenstance, you are already five or six steps ahead of most roleplaying groups. You can focus on strongly presenting the elements your group enjoys, and never have to fret about some players growing restless while you cater to their friends' tastes.

Groups of new D&D players might be more harmonious in their tastes than experienced ones. When they first start out, players thrive on a steady diet of butt-kicking and power accumulation. Traditionally, a taste for less visceral hooks, such as story or curiosity, develops later.

Illus. by W. O'Connor

For those who like those elements, it's tempting to conclude that they're somehow more valid or sophisticated, because they "evolve" out of another style of play. Others argue that fighting and puzzle solving are the pure form of the game from which artsier types have strayed. Both arguments are just some players' way of claiming an objective superiority for their personal preferences.

When you play with the same harmonious group for a long time, the quirks of your group's style might come to seem like the only way to play. You might be in for culture shock if a new recruit joins, or if you're forced to find a new crop of players for some reason.

Should that happen, you can return to this book for tips on incorporating the unfamiliar expectations newcomers bring to your table. Until then, enjoy the luxury of your group's common approach.

Mixed Groups

Next to a group with very similar tastes, a group with varied tastes might prove easiest to deal with. Either all the players like to mix up their play, or there's one strong proponent of each style at your table. Ensure that you devote a solid chunk of time to each player's signature moment, and you're set.

During prep time, review each adventure, confirming that it includes something for everyone in your group. Roughly gauge how much play time each encounter will take, whether it's a room in a dungeon or a scene in a plot-based scenario. Look out for danger spots—long stretches of game time in which one or more players have no opportunity for signature moments. Create new sequences or moments in which these elements do come into play.

Also, work up a modular sequence for each of your group's major hooks, ready to be dropped into nearly any adventure. When you see that a player has gone too long without a rewarding moment, reach for the prepared scene and move the group toward it as quickly as you can without making the shift apparent to the group.

Here are some examples of prefabricated audience pleasers, broken down by incentive.

Accumulating Cool Powers: Provide a chance to gain a magic item. Announce a special XP reward (equal to a standard encounter at the character's current level) for the completion of a task.

Kicking Butt: Insert a gratuitous but lively battle against slightly inferior opponents.

Brilliant Planning: Create a dangerous situation that can be circumvented by use of a clever scheme.

Puzzle Solving: Add a puzzle.

Favorite Role: Create a situation requiring the use of the specialist PC's defining gimmick: something to sneak into for the ninja, a narrow precipice to balance on for the acrobatic adventurer, and so on.

Supercoolness: Provide an opportunity for appropriate NPCs to acknowledge the character's abilities.

Story: Insert a scene that advances an ongoing storyline.

Psychodrama: Introduce a character for the PC to interact with, one echoing the character's inner struggle.

Irresponsibility: Provide a buffoonish authority figure to harmlessly bedevil, or an impressive structure to spectacularly demolish.

Exploration: Insert a travelogue moment.

Outlier: This type can usually find ways to be a nonconformist without your help.

Lurker: Let the lurker be distracted and happily contribute from the shadows.

GROUND RULES

When you first assemble a new group of players, explicitly mention the ground rules under which your game will run. Often these rules refer to the standard choices you make whenever you DM. On occasion you might wish to change a technique to suit the mood or theme of a specific campaign.

House Rules

Inform your players in advance of any modifications you intend to make to the published rules. Your house rules probably affect, directly or otherwise, the relative utility and cost-effectiveness of various PC abilities. Players should know about them before they create their characters. If you can't predict the effect your rules have on PC abilities, you should probably think about them some more before adding them to your game.

Though many DMs enjoy tinkering with rules, remember to balance the positive benefits of any rules alteration against the time it takes your players to learn them. The longer your list of house rules, the more intimidating your game will seem, especially to players who don't enjoy rules for their own sake.

House rules are covered in greater detail on page 80.

Information Flow

In a straight dungeon adventure, the party sticks together most of the time. In a city-based intrigue or investigation, they might frequently split into smaller teams according to their specialties. To one degree or another, some PCs will gain information and undergo experiences not shared by their comrades. You can handle the unshared information issue in several ways, all of which require player cooperation. Tell your players ahead of time which model you plan to use.

High Secrecy Mode: The players know no more than their characters do. When a PC participates in a scene or encounter and the others are not present, you take him aside, most likely into another room, and run the

encounter there. If one or two characters are somehow excluded from a scene, they are asked to leave the room while the rest continue playing.

Even in the presence of the other PCs, a character might learn some tidbit of information unknown to the other characters. For example, she might see a clue with a high Spot check result, or perhaps one of the characters has the scent ability. In some groups, the convention is that all such facts are instantly revealed to the entire group. In others, characters sometimes keep secrets; the player decides what to reveal and when. In such cases, you communicate any private discoveries to players with written notes. An especially secretive group could run a deeply Machiavellian game with each player using a laptop with a wireless modem, using instant messaging to zap hidden information and hush-hush instructions back and forth.

Example: While exploring a cavern complex, the party discovers the entrance to a ductlike crawlway that only Derrick's character Fleance is small enough to squeeze into. While Fleance is working his way into the passageway, you play out the scene as usual, in front of the other players. As soon as he's out of earshot, you grab some dice, escort Derrick out onto your back deck, and run the rest of the scene for him alone. Fleance crawls through the passageway and winds up inside a cramped chamber in which a drow sorcerer, Zz'urzab, is imprisoned. The drow casts a *charm person* spell on Fleance. Zz'urzab draws a map of the complex and shows Fleance a room with a lever on the wall. If the lever is pulled, an otherwise impregnable trap door in the bottom of the drow's cell will open up, allowing him to escape. The *charmed* Fleance agrees to steer his friends to this chamber, even though it's packed with dangerous creatures and is completely barren of treasure. Then he will pull the lever, freeing his new ally. After further agreeing not to tell his allies about Zz'urzab, Fleance departs, returning through the crawlway.

At this point, you return with Derrick to the main game room. "Nothing in there but rocks and bat guano," Derrick tells the other players. He then proceeds to follow Fleance's agreement with Zz'urzab, leading the group into relatively profitless trouble.

What Derrick doesn't know is that, in a similar secret scene played out last week, one of the other PCs, the wizard Redmoor, learned that the drow sorcerer who killed his family was recently seen in the area, and probably plans an assault on the kingdom. The sorcerer's name was Zz'urzab.

High secrecy uses the principle of surprise, in which the players have a feeling that something's afoot and hope to find out what it is. To make it work properly, you should

Illus. by F. Vohwinkel

Fleance discovers a drow sorcerer and falls under her spell

routinely take group members aside to share mundane, uninteresting secrets with them. Otherwise everyone will know something important is up every time you take a player aside for a private conference. When the player returns, the rest of the players might be prone to relentlessly grilling him until he gives up the goods.

High secrecy helps players believe in the reality of the world; they don't have to split their awareness between what they know and what their characters know. Players who value a strong belief in the fictional reality of the world and their characters prefer this approach. They include players whose tastes run to drama, tactics, and puzzle solving.

The disadvantage of high secrecy is that it forces you to leave members of the group idle while running scenes in which their characters aren't present. This dead time breaks energy and focus, making it harder for you to get uninvolved players reengaged with the game when they get to act again. This cost of the high secrecy approach might seem especially high when you're secretly imparting irrelevant, boring information as a smokescreen for later revelations that really matter.

Spectator Mode: In this situation, players are allowed to watch scenes they don't participate in, even if they learn secrets the active PC wouldn't want them to know. Players are expected to maintain a distance between what they know as audience members and what their PCs know. When a player seems to be acting on information gained by watching a scene she didn't take part in, the DM steps in to remind her of the barrier between character knowledge and player knowledge. If need be, you can rule that the character can't perform a proposed action, because it's motivated by information he doesn't possess.

Example: The above example with Fleance and the drow plays out as follows in spectator mode.

The entire group sits in as Derrick rolls to get through the crawlway and continues to watch as he meets Zz'urzab and is *charmed*. Derrick knows the name Zz'urzab as soon as he hears it, because he got to watch the scene from last session in which the identity of Redmoor's archenemy was revealed. Redmoor hasn't shared this information with Fleance, so Derrick plays his PC's ignorance in good faith—he carries on as if the name means nothing to him. Redmoor's player, Alessandra, slaps her forehead in chagrin as Zz'urzab *charms* Fleance and convinces him to aid his escape.

When Fleance returns to the other characters, the other players are obligated to play their characters as though they lacked knowledge of what just happened in the other room. When Derrick says, "Nothing in there but rocks and bat guano," Alessandra asks if she can make a Sense Motive check. You ask her to justify why Redmoor would take this action, when he normally trusts Fleance. Unable to come up with a justification that does not rely on knowledge her character doesn't have, Alessandra groans and readies herself for trouble with her archenemy.

Spectator mode operates on the principle of suspense, as in a movie when the audience knows what the protagonist doesn't—that a killer is lurking overhead, for example. Film director Alfred Hitchcock argued that suspense was more powerful than mere surprise, because it builds tension over time. A moment of surprise comes out of nowhere and is over in a moment. In the above example, the players will spend a good part of the session waiting to see what happens when the other shoe drops.

The chief advantage of spectator mode is that it keeps all the players in the same room, engaged with the proceedings even if some of them aren't participating directly in the action all the time. In a tense game, players enjoy periods of respite when they don't have to make any decisions, and someone else is stuck in a tight spot.

Story-oriented players tend to especially enjoy this approach. Spectator mode reduces the pressure on you to keep the party together, allowing players who want to pursue private agendas the freedom to do so. Explorers like spectator mode because it allows their characters to poke around a location without having to persuade other party members to come along. Specialists can experience their signature moments more easily on side missions; it's tough to be a stealthy ninja when trailing an entourage of clanking, armor-clad knights and chatty halflings behind you. Spectator mode helps you cater to mischief-makers and oddballs, who can get into trouble without bringing the ill consequences of their actions down on annoyed fellow players.

A major drawback of spectator mode is that you have to keep track of who knows what, because players can easily become confused. The suspense of knowing that bad events are brewing might be too frustrating for some players. Drama-oriented players might feel it breaks the illusion of fiction, which is most vivid for them when they can put themselves completely in their characters' mindset. Because it reduces the social pressure to avoid side missions, players more interested in straight-up fighting and looting scenarios might also dislike spectator mode. They want their specialists, explorers, and mischief-makers to stick with the group, so that the evening can be more closely devoted to the efficient harvesting of experience points.

If you choose to play in spectator mode, you also have to decide how much kibitzing to allow from players whose characters are not taking part in the scene at hand. You can either announce a policy in advance or feel your way through and decide on a case-by-case basis. Your choices include the following options.

Audience Only: Spectator players are expected to quietly follow the exploits of active characters. By keeping the

scene focused, they help the scene move faster and get back in the action sooner.

Comments Only: Off-stage players are allowed to make comments on the proceedings, but can't communicate advice or other useful information to the focus player. As is the case with any game, the degree of side commenting is kept within reason—a little can add to the sense of fun and camaraderie, but too much gets the group off track.

Comments and Advice: Sessions are generally more brisk and more fun when the players are making good decisions. When the group is together, players can confer to come up with the best ideas. If you want your PCs to act like fictional heroes who make poor decisions only for dramatic purposes, allow them to continue soliciting advice from the group. When advising a spotlight character, off-stage players should not advance their in-character agendas, but instead do their best to provide suggestions in the active PC's best interest. They're not playing their PCs as if they're in touch with the spotlight character by cell phone. This communication occurs strictly in the realm of player knowledge.

Whichever choice you make, you might also want to permit side scenes, in which off-stage players find a quiet corner to play out scenes in character without you, planning future activities, swapping information, or making arrangements to present to you when you wrap up the side mission. Ask them to move out of earshot if you find their byplay distracting.

Takebacks

It might be tough to know whether a player is definitively announcing her character's actions or is merely thinking out loud. Sometimes a player announces a decision in jest, or without due thought, and then reacts in appalled surprise when you start rolling dice and narrating the grim results of her rash decision. To avoid this situation, make clear your policy on announced actions.

No Takebacks: When players tell you their characters are taking an action, that action is then taken. You roll dice as required and adjudicate the result, no matter the outcome. If the players want to think out loud, they should phrase their musings carefully. Even if a player is just joking, the action happens. If the player acts without confirming the facts of a situation, that's too bad: Being clear on the dangers before acting is an essential part of the game.

Most groups find this rule unduly punitive, but those that lean decisively toward combat, tactics, and XP gathering might appreciate the Spartan rigor.

Jokes Okay: You won't be so adversarial as to hammer a player for an occasional suggested action that's meant as a joke. But all apparently serious instructions to the DM occur as announced.

Takebacks Okay for Clearly Nonsensical or Misinformed Actions: Sometimes players decide to act without taking into consideration facts that would be obvious to their characters. Let's say a gaping chasm lies just on the other side of a dungeon doorway. You intend the chasm as an obstacle for the group to navigate, not a trap. After the PCs open the door, but before you can describe the chasm, a player tells you his character is stepping carefully across the threshold. Taken literally, this declaration means the PC plunges headlong into the yawning abyss. No reasonable adventurer would fail to see the drop, however, so this action defies common sense. Instead of rolling to see how much falling damage the PC takes, you can interrupt the player, explain the situation, and caution him against announcing actions before his character has surveyed the basic terrain.

From the DM's chair, it's not always apparent how much of a scene the players are accurately picturing, even when you have extensively described it to them. You might have all the details clearly in mind, but it's all too easy for players to miss a key phrase or imagine a room layout different from the one on your map.

TOP 10 WAYS TO RUIN YOUR GAME

10. Confuse your players with constant additions to your house rules list. Whenever possible, change rules in the middle of an encounter.
9. Use your game to achieve the power over others that eludes you in real life. Make each session a test of your players' appetite for punishment.
8. Run games while suffering from extreme sleep deprivation. Compensate by overdosing on caffeine. To increase the chances of a mid-game brain crash, start the game without having eaten properly.
7. Encourage players with dominant personalities to hog the spotlight. Wallflowers deserve to be trampled.
6. When the players become frustrated, allow their frustration to feed yours. Openly display your irritation with them.
5. When your players get up the nerve to directly suggest ideas to make the game more fun for them, reject their input. How dare they question your magnificence?
4. Browbeat shy players into participating more fully.
3. In a naked bid for attention, demand that the players participate in detailed after-session dissections of your gaming style, even though they seem relatively happy with the game as is.
2. Engineer ways for your real-world disputes with friends to manifest themselves within the game environment. Create scenes and encounters that are thinly veiled reenactments of your players' painful personal experiences.
1. DM in a style geared exclusively to your own personal tastes, as if you were running a one-on-one game for yourself. Create an intellectual ideology explaining why your way is the only way to play. Scream its finer points at your players as they head out the door to find a new DM.

Even in a plot-oriented game, players can easily make bad decisions that their characters would not. The characters know the world better than the players do, and you should always be forgiving when players propose actions that wouldn't make sense in the world. For example, you might have established that the elves in your campaign observe a certain etiquette when greeting outsiders. A ranger character who grew up with elves would know the protocols inside out, having used them hundreds of times. The player has only heard about them once, in a lengthy explanation you provided to the group six weeks ago. If she tells you her character marches up to the elf queen and launches into a list of trade demands, most groups would consider it unfair if the queen's guards then carted off the PC. Instead, interrupt to remind the player of facts that are obvious to the character, then allow her to act.

AT THE TABLE

You've figured out what your players like and have prepared an adventure that delivers their favored hooks. The final ingredient to truly wow them is an exciting presentation style at the table.

Good communicators know how to attract and hold the attention of others. Great communicators do that, but more important, they learn to pay attention to others. This principle sounds simple, but it's amazing how many DMs ignore this advice.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Many imaginative people appear shy and withdrawn because they're accustomed to living inside their own thoughts. D&D, with its combination of number crunching and fantastic imagery, draws more than its share of brilliant introverts. Some would-be DMs who fit this profile have convinced themselves that effective communication is beyond them. They should take heart: Effective communication is a mechanical skill that can be learned through applied effort, similar to learning a computer language or becoming a trivia expert.

Mental Focus

To hold other people's attention, you must first maintain your mental focus. Your brain operates like a muscle; it won't perform well if it's tired. Before the session begins, make sure your mind is fresh and ready to go. If possible, take a nap before your game starts. If you don't have time or the opportunity, at least rest yourself mentally.

Eat properly before the game. While you shouldn't put yourself in a state of pythonlike torpor by overeating, your brain won't operate properly if you're running low on calories. Foods laden with sugar and grease give you a short-term mental energy boost but will cause you to crash a few hours later. Avoid overcaffeinating. Keep fresh fruit on hand for a shot of nutritional energy when your brain starts to freeze up.

Perform a set-up ritual while waiting for players to arrive: As you move your furniture into place and assemble your notes, dice, and miniatures, allow your mind to forget your daily preoccupations and shift into game mode. Think of a few events that are likely to occur in the game. Review the special attacks of monsters the party will likely encounter.

You might play at a club or in someone else's house, in which case you will be traveling to the site, just like the rest of your group. If so, take a few moments alone when you arrive to get yourself focused on the task of gaming. Then rejoin the group.

Drawing off the Social Energy

Now that you've focused your attention, it's time to forget the game for a bit, as you give your group's social energy a chance to dissipate.

D&D is first of all a social activity; when your players get together they will want to chat—about the weekend's hit movie, current events, or the disasters of the day. A little preliminary chit-chat is never a waste of your game time. It builds a sense of commonality and friendship that motivates the group to work together. A reservoir of goodwill is crucial when differences of taste or opinion arise. Besides, you probably want to chat for a while, too. You've prepared your mind; now it's time to relax before you get rolling.

By giving everybody a chance to discuss off-game topics, you reduce their appetite for digression during the game itself. If your players arrive separately, they probably straggle in over about half an hour or so. The arrival coincides perfectly with the ideal chat time. Late arrivers should understand if they get less than their share of the usual jawboning time.

Segue into the game itself as the last late arrival gets settled in, or when the energy level in the room peaks, as judged by the group's collective volume and body language.

Chat time should be a chance for you to rest your voice and brain; there's no need for you to dominate it, since you will be the focus of attention for the remainder of the session. However, if two or more players have an antagonistic friendship dynamic that can slip from good-natured sniping to actual hostility, by all means step in and subtly head them off if a discussion grows too heated. Try to steer the conversation back to more pleasant socializing before beginning the game. Bad feelings at a session's outset are tough to overcome.

Projecting Energy and Confidence

To command attention during the game, you must first appear visibly interested in what you're saying. Keep an

eye on your own body language. If you slump back lazily in your chair, you might seem bored. If you fidget with dice or pens, you might appear distracted. Constant flipping through the rulebook or adventure might make you seem scattered and unprepared. Instead, sit forward in your chair. Use your hands to express what you're saying; when you're not speaking, keep them still. If you are an incurable fidget, you can hide this habit by doodling, provided you keep your pages hidden behind a screen. To your players, it will seem as if you're taking constant notes. If you use this trick, you should be looking into the room, at your players, and not at the paper.

Your goal is to project a quiet, controlled energy that draws your players in. When you speak, make eye contact with the person you're addressing. Learn the secret of charismatic people: They use subtle cues to signal their intense interest in, and approval of, those around them. Be engaged by your players, and they will be engaged by you. When you're speaking to more than one player, move your point of eye contact around the room. Avoid furniture arrangements in which one player is hard to see, unless he's a shy gamer who deliberately tries to stay out of the spotlight.

Quietly charismatic people display another key quality: You can always see them thinking. Top-notch film actors display this quality. Closely study a movie featuring a performance by an actor such as Humphrey Bogart, Kevin Spacey, or Julianne Moore. Note how attuned these performers seem to everything around them. See how alive their eyes are, how tiny shifts in facial expression speak volumes.

With these performances in mind, plunk yourself in front of a mirror and try to use your eyes and face to project a similar state of high awareness. You might not win an Academy Award by mastering this trick, but you will gain a new, unobtrusive authority at the gaming table.

Your Speaking Voice

If you can talk off the top of your head, clearly and entertainingly, you will be perceived as a good DM, even if your technique in other areas could use polishing. Conversely, poor speaking habits can distance your players, making them feel uninvolved with the campaign, no matter how good you are at rules adjudication, world creation, and adventure design.

Good vocal delivery is not a matter of speaking in loud, exaggerated tones or adding emphasis with broad gesticulations. A high-energy approach can be invigorating in small doses but becomes wearying over an entire session. Riveting DMs speak in a low-key way, using the focusing techniques described in the previous section.

Are you good at listening to the sound of your own voice? Most people aren't. Try to vary the pace of your speech as much as possible. Be expressive. If you're good at funny voices, use them; they provide a welcome jolt of variety. Though sometimes you want to sustain a serious mood, usually it's more important to keep the players engaged.

Make an audio recording of a small chunk of a game session so you can listen to yourself DM. You will probably be appalled by the sound of your own voice—almost everyone is. After you get over that, listen to your speech patterns, specifically for variance in rhythm. Do you speak in a constant, predetermined rhythm? If so, you might be lulling your players to sleep. Also check to see if you talk in a monotone, with a regular, unvarying pitch. A monotone voice is not only tranquilizing; it's hard to understand, because the speaker fails to emphasize crucial words in a sentence. As it processes speech, the human mind relies on emphasis to quickly interpret meaning. Because information is difficult to extract from a monotone, the brain usually tunes out a droning speaker after a short period.

Both a lullaby rhythm and a monotone can be cured through some quick if slightly traumatic effort. Corral an understanding friend to run a practice game with you. Record one of your sessions on tape as you consciously try to vary your rhythm to fit the content of your speech. Say goodbye to your monotone delivery by punching out the critical words in each sentence. In either case, make yourself exaggerate wildly until you get the hang of it. Then turn your delivery back down to a normal mode of speaking.

Another way to punch up your voice is through mimicry. Find monologues you like, either dramatic ones from movies or television shows, or standup comedy routines.

PREPARED TEXT

Sections of prepared text (sometimes called readaloud text) can either provide information in a dense, well-written package, or bore your players. These sections are useful tools in published adventures if descriptive language doesn't easily roll off your tongue. When you're unexpectedly forced to pull an adventure out of your collection and run it without any prep time, prepared text is a godsend.

In most cases, though, you should regard prepared text as training wheels. These sections provide a good model of the sights, sounds, and moods you ought to be describing, but are best used as a backup.

If you're a classically trained actor, you might be able to read any text with riveting results. Most ordinary mortals sound more interesting even when fumbling for the right word than while reading aloud. Whenever possible, paraphrase prepared text from adventures, moving quickly to the salient points.

Look for anecdotal comedy, as performed by Bill Cosby or Jerry Seinfeld, rather than comics who specialize in one-liners. Pay attention to the way these comedians vary speed and pitch to hammer home the pivotal thoughts in each line. Learn to perform them for yourself, line by line, inflection by inflection. Try to tell a story of your own in this borrowed voice. Then tell the same story in your own voice.

Difficulties with both tone and rhythm are not uncommon among very bright people, especially those who were early readers as children. They tend to speak in the same voice they hear in their heads as they read. If you have to work on how you speak, don't feel bad—it's just more evidence of your unquestionable intelligence.

Staying on Point

Your players won't clearly follow what you're saying if you're not sure yourself. Whether you're describing a dungeon scene or a courtship with a princess, keep your mind on the events currently transpiring in the game. Before embarking on a lengthy explanation of any sort, stop and ask yourself what your players need to know at this moment.

As a DM, it's too easy to miss the forest for the trees, especially when faced with a subject you find particularly interesting, whether it's a house rule for attacks of opportunity or the cultural norms of nomadic peoples. An explanation that lasts for more than a few minutes is probably too long. If your group is sitting in rapt attention, you should continue your current fascinating monologue. Chances are, however, that your players begin to tune out after absorbing two or three salient points from your first minute or so of speech. Even in a formal lecture setting, people take in only a few bits of information at a time; the rest is taken down as notes and is forgotten even as the scribbles hit the page. A D&D game is not a lecture; if you bombard your players with streams of information, most of it will go in one ear and out the other.

Parcel out exposition in short bursts. Leave spaces so players can ask questions. Let them feel their way through the information you want to present in an order they find accessible. Answers elicited by the players will always be much more memorable than facts you supply to them unbidden.

Everybody gets lost in the middle of a thought from time to time. When you find yourself blathering, stop and ask yourself the central questions of any verbal communication:

What is my purpose in saying this?

Why should the people listening to me care?

Answer these questions, and you will know what to say—and what to leave out.

Props

Props, ranging from maps and other handouts to miniatures to physical puzzles, are useful not just for providing information, but for refocusing player attention. When you pull out a prop, you change the energy in the room. Try especially to use props that get players out of their seats and gathered around a single point in the room. A handout that is passed around the table is useful, as is providing a copy for each player. Providing only one copy is often better, since it forces all the players to group together.

Props are excellent weapons in the continual war against brain fog. The use of a prop gets your players' synapses firing in a different way, as they switch from processing verbal information to their visual senses. It also gets everyone to congregate at a single point, subliminally reinforcing group unity. (Getting your players to move from their seats is less important if you play sitting around a table; in that case, you can create a break by contriving a reason for everyone to leave the table to look at a prop stashed elsewhere.)

Look through your house for odd, portable objects and ask yourself how they might figure in a D&D encounter. Avoid choosing anything too silly, such as a kitchen gadget.

MINIATURES AS PROPS

Miniatures are essential tools for running D&D fights. Used creatively, though, they can also serve as attention-focusing props outside combat.

Try to preserve a sense of mystery with the miniatures you intend to use. Keep the NPC and creature minis hidden away when not in use. You wouldn't let actors peek out from the wings before their appearance onstage, so don't let your miniatures reveal themselves ahead of time, either. Avoid causing visual confusion by idly fidgeting with them.

Reveal them with a flourish—if you're doing it right, your players will perk up as soon as you reach for your minis carrying case.

With an appropriate floor plan to go with them, minis could be used to lay out the positioning of characters in a crime scene.

Minis can also be used in character-driven scenes. You could place them in an opening tavern scene, so the players recognize an important NPC from her miniature when they later encounter her in the dungeon.

You can also allow miniatures to drive the plot. Set up an opening scene in a marketplace or prison yard, and see which minis the players are drawn to. Improvise a plot line around the ones the PCs seek out for interaction.

A miniature could even create pathos. Introduce the players to a healthy patron character; later, pull out a second version of the figure, modified to display hideous wounds or the symptoms of a debilitating curse.

But anything from a knickknack to a mysterious machine part might spark an idea for a puzzle or an interaction with an NPC.

Not all props are physical objects. Whenever you engage the players' senses, you engage their attention. The use of strategically cued music or sound effects works the same way; music in particular is strongly emotional, and even a quick snippet of it can completely alter a group's mood.

If you want to really focus attention, plunge the room into darkness as the group's light sources are compromised. Or break out an aromatherapy kit to waft some dungeon smells at the players.

PAYING ATTENTION

As already mentioned, getting attention is about paying attention. By learning to read and heed your players' body language, you can tell whether you need to add excitement, ease up the pressure, or keep the room's energy level right where it is.

Bored or disengaged players slump in their chairs. They fidget or flip through books. They take off their glasses. When someone's talking, their eyes are aimed at the ceiling or down at their books, rather than toward the speaker. To reengage them, look to your own energy level. Lean forward in your chair. Slightly increase the volume and speed of your voice. If the party is in a town or other open-ended environment, cut to a new scene or introduce an NPC. In a dungeon room, toss in a new clue or sensory detail, even if you have to add one that isn't in the adventure as written. If possible, make this new element a favorite incentive for one or more of the players—or at least a sign that such a scene is on the way.

Overwhelmed, frustrated, or upset players also move away from you, retreating into their chairs. They don't slump; they tense up. They put their heads in their hands or run fingers through their hair. Decrease the sense of confrontation by relaxing your own body language and moving back from the table. In a calm, quiet tone, sum up the situation that's got them stumped, in a way that both minimizes their dilemma and suggests a number of actions they might take to get out of trouble. If the obstacle is a dispute between players, maintain the same basic tone, but use the tips given later in this chapter on mediation.

Tired players yawn, rub their eyes, and blink. They find it difficult to find the right words when they speak, or to perform simple calculations or remember what they just rolled. Sleepiness is contagious; one yawn breeds another. When the group seems tired, chances are that they caught it from you—you're the one whose brain has been working the hardest. If you're far from your usual quitting time, call a break for snacks, chatter, and fresh air. If you're near to the end of your session, pack it in early. When you're tired, it's harder to accept input from others and easy to make decisions based on irritation and momentary expedience. You're better off leaving the players wanting more than plunging ahead into a morass of sluggish, sleep-deprived play.

KEEP IT MOVING

As a DM, you interact with players whose attention spans have been assailed by the ever-accelerating pace of today's movies, TV shows, and video games. Genre audiences absorb information faster than ever before, and they expect to be bombarded with thrills. Your D&D game will never be as fast-paced as the latest summer blockbuster, and your players know it. What they get in place of brilliant cinematography and eye-popping special effects is direct participation in the experience. Though you should never

USING A LAPTOP

A laptop computer can help you stay on top of your game, as long as you don't allow it to steal your focus away from your players. Sitting behind a laptop creates an instant air of organization, implying that you have an incredible depth of information at your fingertips.

By storing information on your hard drive, you can avoid the pile of loose pages that fill up any DM's gaming table. You can create information on your world in a series of hyperlinked word processing documents, allowing you to access anything you need quickly. Prepared lists of locations, proper names, and creature statistics blocks can also be called up quickly and easily on a computer.

Some DMs access the D&D rules by downloading the Standard Reference Document (SRD); when they need an obscure rule, they can locate it quickly with a search function.

You might want to investigate the wide variety of DM-aid programs available commercially or as freeware. With the help of these tools, you can create anything from a randomized NPC to a trove of treasure with a few keystrokes.

Any simple graphics or drafting program can be set up to keep track of character position or initiative order, allowing you to move images or blocks of information around quickly and easily.

Mapping software allows you to create beautiful cartographic images during your prep time, and then display it in full color to your players, revealing rooms and secret features as they explore. You can display illustrations or photos to help players visualize the PCs' surroundings. In both cases, you refocus player attention by bringing them together to look at the same image at the same time.

However, a laptop can be as alienating as it is helpful. When it is not in use, you should make sure the laptop sits off to one side; it should never block your players' view of you. Until you become deft at unobtrusively activating programs and viewing documents on the fly, you will take the focus from the players and transfer it to something they can't see. While you're working, you're missing crucial cues—if the players are engaged with the game at all.

sacrifice player involvement for speed, in general the faster you can make your game go, the better.

Speeding up Combat

Whether you run a traditional combat-heavy dungeon exploration game or focus on investigation and intrigue, your fight scenes should be as thrilling as their cinematic equivalents. Make them come to life with speed and imagination. Nothing is more boring than another rote episode of bleary-eyed dice rolling.

Take breaks either before or after a fight scene, never in the middle of one; you will dissipate whatever excitement you've generated and find it hard to pick up where you left off. If the group seems tired as a fight sequence looms, take a break. Tired minds turn even an epic battle into an exercise in tedium.

Tracking Initiative

The most effective way to keep up the pace during a fight scene is to move swiftly between active characters. Unless keeping track of the initiative order mentally comes as second nature to you, you should always use some method that allows you to cycle quickly to each character's turn.

Try out the following initiative tracking methods to find the one that works fastest for you.

Index Cards: Use index cards to represent the PCs, and a blank card of a different color to represent each opponent's turn. On each card, write the character's (or enemy's) name and the minimum information you need for the encounter. Some DMs want Armor Class only. Others want to know what sensory abilities (scent, darkvision, and so on) the PCs might have. When initiative is determined, put the cards in initiative order. Go through the cards in order each round. Change the order as necessary for readied or delayed actions.

Whiteboard: If you have a whiteboard, chalkboard, easel pad, or other large writing surface handy, write the initiative order on it. Assign an alert, combat-oriented player to help you out by calling out the next actor, and to adjust the order as delayed actions occur.

Musical Chairs: During combat, ask the players to shift places around the room, physically placing them in initiative order. The players might grumble a bit if they favor a particular seating arrangement or spot at the table, but it's worth disturbing their sense of territoriality to speed up the fight.

Better yet, have the group stand around the table, grouped in initiative order. Standing adds an increased sense of urgency and makes order of action immediately apparent.

If you still have a difficult time keeping track of initiative, have your players help out by using a prop—a fake scepter or plastic sword—to pass off like a baton to the next active player after each completes his or her turn.

Tracking methods falter when accounting for delayed or readied actions. You forget to have the character act, or the player forgets. In the musical chairs method, have delaying or readying players step several paces back from the table. When they choose to act, they swoop back in, squeezing into a new spot, and snatching up the baton of action. This method adds a fun physical element to what is too often a moment of confusion. For added entertainment, require a battle cry or cool description of his character's action from any player taking a delayed or ready action.

To help standing players quickly track hit points and used spells, go to an office supply store and invest in some

SAMPLE MOVE DESCRIPTIONS

- He sidesteps neatly and brings his lion-headed hammer raining down between your shoulder blades!
- She roars, revealing her lizardlike tongue, and skitters at you with her rapier slashing the air.
- It slithers with surprising speed from the pile of barrels and snaps at you with 6-inch-long teeth.
- You see that its stinking claws are flecked with bits of rotting meat!
- Hissing and blinking their tiny red eyes, they skitter around, trying to outflank you.
- [Attack of opportunity] Casually, without even looking at you, it flicks its spiky tail at your head.
- [Poor roll] It lunges for you but clumsily misses, squealing in outrage.
- [Wounded creature makes good roll] As if lent new anger by its horrible wounds, it hurls itself at you, rattling your bones with a fearsome blow.
- [PC damaged by fire attack] Tiny curls of crisped fiber fall in front of your eyes. You realize they're your eyebrows.

SAMPLE QUIPS AND BATTLE CRIES

- "Stand down, poltroon, or face the wrath of my spinning blades!"
- "You've thwarted me for the last time, do-gooders!"
- "Me eat stupid wizard's bones!"
- "In the name of my ancestors, I destroy thee!"
- "Taste cold steel!"
- "Die!"
- "Die, I told you—*die*!"
- "I'll put you in your grave, impetuous rogue!"
- "Master says you our enemy! So you our enemy!"
- [Drooling noises] "Youse smellses tasty. . . ."
- "For every wound you inflict on my boon companions, I'll return the favor a thousandfold!"
- "The bards will sing songs of this epic battle!"
- "You're good, adventurer—but not good enough."
- "I'd let you live, but I'm a willing servant of evil."
- "In the name of all the dark deities, I shall spill your blood."

cheap clipboards. They can then make notations without breaking stride.

Prerolling

Some DMs prefer to roll attacks and damage for their monsters and NPCs in advance. With a spreadsheet program, you can create pages of random numbers in whatever range you need. Label each page with a tab telling you which die it simulates, so you can grab quickly for your d20 page or d12 page as needed. (You could just as well group the less common dice in columns on a single printed spreadsheet.) Each time you need a roll, use and cross out the next entry on the relevant page or column.

Prerolling might or might not be faster for you, depending on how adept you are at swapping sheets of paper around. Some players might feel inexplicably cheated if they don't see you tossing dice on the table; for many, the rhythm of rolling dice is the essential punctuation in a combat scene.

Color Commentary

Don't let the players' visualization of the world and their characters vanish when the dice come out of their bags. Keep track of the numbers, but also work to stoke the group's visual imagination. At the beginning of a fight, most DMs describe the opponents and their surroundings. Take your description one step further: During the fight, even as you zip through the initiative order and keep track of your creature tactics, throw in the occasional line of colorful description or throatily screamed dialogue. Using these little bits of added description takes more time at the table, but makes the fight seem faster and more fun. Especially low or high rolls on your part, either on attacks or damage, cry out for play-by-play commentary. See the Sample Move Descriptions and Sample Quips and Battle Cries sidebars for examples.

Encourage players to add their own fun descriptions of moves, and to call out frenzied battle cries. In pivotal fights, announce a small XP bonus for the encounter to each player who adds at least one move description or entertaining catch phrase during battle. Enthusiasm matters more than originality; if your butt-kicker player wants to howl, "Yaaaarrggghhh!" every time her character swings a weapon, give her the bonus.

Let players know that it's okay to plan in advance by writing move descriptions and catch phrases on index cards, ready for appropriate use. You should feel free to do the same for your creatures and enemies, if you find it hard to improvise them on the spot. Tailor descriptions to each monster type and include them in your encounter notes.

Maintaining Pace outside Combat

In combat, you must ward off confusion and keep imagination alive when the dice start to roll. However, the most deadly pacing dilemmas occur outside combat sequences.

Unstructured scenes of interaction, planning, and exploration slow down when the players can't figure out what to do next. They might not see clear options for forward movement, or they might have too many choices to select from. In the heat of battle, characters decide what to do and then act on their own. At other times, decisions are made by the group. Sometimes these discussions, during which the players interact in character, provide more fun than any fight or NPC interaction. However, they can just as easily bog down into frustration, argument, and inaction.

Shaping Discussion

Moments of player discussion can be a DM's best friend. They give you a chance to rest up as the players take center stage. However, even as you review notes for an upcoming encounter or just sit back and let your brain idle, you should still remain attentive to the mood of the room. Conflicts between players flare up during group planning. These times are also when demoralization and gridlock can set in.

Some old-school DMs believe in a strict noninterventionist approach to player discussion. In theory, the players should have absolute freedom to plan without the DM horning in. In practice, though, the players often end up confused and frustrated. Through subtle nudging, you can prevent planning sessions from getting off track or

TURTLING

Sessions might gridlock when players go into a defensive posture, having their characters stage their planning sessions in some impregnable location where you can't realistically move the story along by introducing new characters and situations. In gamer jargon, this activity is known as "turtling." Although you can still move the situation forward by shaping the discussion, you should look at this behavior as a symptom of another problem. You might have created a world so dangerous and punitive that your players feel they need to hide themselves away from it, in which case you want to ease back on its hazards. The setting should challenge the players without terrifying them into trembling inaction.

Some players are inherently cautious and pessimistic, and engage in turtling even in the face of threats their PCs are capable of overcoming. You might find that players have learned to do this while playing in unnecessarily harsh games run by other DMs. Once ingrained, these habits are hard to overcome. Address the problem directly: Tell the players that they're not outmatched, and their characters can succeed through bold action.

dragging on without a resolution. As you listen to player deliberations, make a note of each viable suggestion a player floats. Never interrupt a discussion that seems to be progressing toward a resolution. However, if the players have been talking in circles for more than about five minutes without adding any new options to the list, step in and quickly summarize the discussion, concisely listing the various choices mentioned so far. In most cases, refocusing the discussion in this way is enough to get the players moving to a conclusion.

Sometimes group gridlock results when the players reject all their options, including those that are perfectly reasonable. Whether this rejection comes from one strong-minded player or the entire group, you can get the group to rethink their options by not only listing the options mentioned so far but also the pros and cons of each. Without being heavy-handed, phrase the objections to good options in a way that urges players to reconsider rejected choices.

If the group seems stuck without any options, review the information the PCs have at hand. Nudge the group toward the clues their characters should have picked up the first time around, without spelling the answers out for them.

You should intervene immediately when you hear a player make an argument based on information the character would know to be incorrect. The player might have misunderstood a description you provided or be making a false assumption. The character, who lives in the world and perceives it firsthand, wouldn't forget basic details of his own experience. Any planning based on wrong information will be pointless and confusing, so head it off the moment you see it happening.

In an investigative scenario, gridlock might result when the players hunker down to plan and theorize without having gathered sufficient information to make good decisions. When you see the players experiencing this difficulty, come right out and tell the players they need to dig up more facts. The group might have huddled up because the players don't know where their PCs should look next. In this case, continue to shape the discussion, prompting them to list possible avenues of investigation. Chances are this activity will get them thinking again; if not, provide a few options to get them started. Though it's more rewarding when players answer these questions themselves, movement is always preferable to quagmire.

It is possible for a group to have a great time even when their PCs disagree and their plan is going nowhere. If the players are thoroughly engaged with dialogue in character, clearly having fun, and keeping the disagreements on the character level, lean back and enjoy the show. The players have turned what might have been a dry planning session into a fun scene of character interaction. Step in to bring it toward a resolution only when the energy peaks, or when nonparticipating players, who might not be so interested in the playacting aspect of D&D, reach a point of visible boredom.

You can learn other lessons by listening carefully to planning sessions. Keep track of the sorts of challenges that tend to foster group gridlock, and avoid them in future adventures. Planning sessions help you grade your ability at imparting information—if the players are regularly confused, you need to express yourself more clearly.

If you're improvising your way through a plot-oriented adventure, the players' discussions can give you better ideas for subsequent scenes than the ones you already had in mind.

AWAY FROM THE TABLE

Good preparation away from the table improves your performance at it. Most of your prep work will be devoted to the creation of adventures and your world. Both of these topics are covered in detail in subsequent chapters. This section looks at preparation work specifically geared to helping your game run smoother, faster, and in a more entertaining manner.

PRIORITIZING

The more time you have to prepare, the more freedom you have to tailor the game to your tastes and those of your players. Time is precious, though, so you need to use what you have to your best advantage.

One-Hour Preparation

If you spend 1 hour preparing for your game each week, use that hour to:

- Select (if you haven't done so already) a published adventure.
- Skim the adventure. With your session length in mind, categorize each scene or encounter based on the likelihood that your players will run through it during the upcoming session: definite, possible, unlikely, not possible.
- Review each "definite" encounter in depth.

  For combat encounters, review the special attacks of enemy combatants, including any modifiers or tactical situations arising from terrain or other unique encounter aspects. Highlight any special senses that might come into play. Review enemy combat tactics, if supplied. Create them, if not. Take notes to fix this information in your memory.

  For interaction encounters, make a note of NPC motivations. What do they want from the adventurers, and how do they try to get it? Select an easily played

character quirk for each important character—a quavery voice, poor vocabulary, or shifty gestures.

For investigative encounters, highlight each relevant clue. Note how the adventurers are meant to get it; come up with at least one alternative way to find the clue if this tactic fails.

- Make a chart cross-referencing all the definite encounters with a list of your players and their hooks. If one or more players is left without a defining moment of fun in any of the encounters, find a suitable encounter and create notes on how to add that element during play. (For example, you might have no chance to affirm the supercoolness of your resident supercool character. But you do have a scene where villagers can be rescued from monsters, so add a note reminding yourself to play up the awe the rescued peasants feel toward this character.)
- Review each "possible" encounter.

  For combat encounters, quickly review special attacks by noting page numbers in the rulebooks where they can be found, if not described for quick reference in the adventure. Read through combat tactics.

  For interaction encounters, note NPC motivations; highlight a salient point for each NPC.

  For investivative encounters, highlight clues; add the scene to a flowchart connecting it to other such encounters.
- Skim each "unlikely" encounter.

Two-Hour Preparation

If you spend 2 hours preparing for your game each week, do the above, plus:

- Review each possible encounter in depth; review each unlikely encounter.
- Devote any remaining time to creating one or more improvisational aids (as described below).

Three-Hour Preparation

As above, but also:

- For a dungeon adventure, create two new encounters designed to appeal specifically to one or more players, or alter an existing one to relate specifically to their hooks and character goals. Find a way to connect them to your published adventure. Spend half an hour on each. As weeks go by, make sure everyone gets a custom encounter eventually. Start with the players you find hardest to cater to, casual players excepted.
- If you're running an investigative or story-driven adventure, create and populate at least one new location in your campaign's home base. For example, you can detail a library, the secret vault of a magic item dealer, or the sheriff's prison compound. It need not relate to the adventure at hand; it can be a place the PCs are likely to visit at some point down the line. Spend fifteen minutes on a map, another fifteen on point-by-point description of the various sections of the location. Create a statistics block for at least one character found at the location, and a description, including a motivation or past history involving one of the PCs. In a line or two of text, invent a connection to any previous locations you have created, so you can lead PCs from one to another.

  Optionally, you can spend half an hour additionally populating a location you created during a past week. The more likely the party is to continue visiting a location, the more time this exercise warrants.

Four-Hour Preparation

Devise an adventure of your own, building in favorite elements for each player. Notate it to highlight special attacks, clue locations, and character motivations, as desired.

If you've created characters and locations during past 3-hour preparation phases, and you're working on

PLAYER PREPARATION

A baseline dungeon exploration campaign requires little commitment from players between sessions. Their out-of-game communication with you will be confined to seeking approval for unconventional abilities or items to add to their character sheets. These requests are best handled by email, assuming both of you have access to it. The players can submit their character changes at their leisure, and you can respond in a spare moment or during your preparation time. XP expenditures for the creation of magic items can be approved in this fashion or in person during the chatter phase preceding actual play.

The more your campaign concerns itself with setting, story, and character, the greater the opportunity the players have to take part in preparation. They can add to their histories, create allies and other friendly supporting characters, and, with your approval, help design friendly places and people in their home base. Subcontracting world creation is a great way to increase the commitment of players to your campaign. Naturally, only creatively inclined players will be interested in such an undertaking. A website with mutual posting privileges provides a satisfying way of organizing your efforts. You can even invite participation from Internet acquaintances around the world.

Using chat or Web-based roleplaying clients, you can run side encounters for one or two players. You can also confer or play by phone, and online dice rollers keep everybody honest.

If you prefer not to separate player knowledge and character knowledge, you might find between-session solo play essential. PCs can perform side missions without leaving the rest of the group in thumb-twiddling mode. You might also be tempted to run them for players who just can't get enough of your game. Beware, though: You can easily alienate less involved players through apparent favoritism. No one wants to show up at a session to find out that another PC gained two levels during an all-night chat game—or even that a character died offstage, and has now been abruptly replaced by a new character.

a city-based adventure, save time by devising a storyline making use of as many of your preexisting places and people as you can smoothly shoehorn together.

IMPROVISATIONAL AIDS

Even in the most straightforward dungeon-based game, PCs eventually head to town in search of rest, recreation, and the chance to spend hard-earned loot. Whenever they enter an unstructured environment, your skill at improvisation will be tested, as the PCs head off in unexpected directions.

Deal with this contingency by preparing for spontaneity. Devote preparation time to the creation of improvisational aids, which help you quickly add detail to your world as questions arise. These aids are basically lists of names and ideas that are ideally suited to piecemeal creation. Keep a rough version of this list handy wherever you go, so you can jot down ideas in odd moments of spare time.

Some essential improvisational aids are discussed below.

Lists of Names, by Race and Gender: Memorable, appropriate fantasy names are tough to dream up spontaneously. Keep a list on hand for NPCs you create at the spur of the moment.

Personality Traits: In a few words apiece, create personalities you can quickly bolt onto barmen, clerks, city guards, courtiers, and other walk-on characters as the need for them arises. Use bold surface traits that you find easy to describe or play: scruffy, fussy, blustery, soft-spoken, angry, mournful, foul-smelling, impertinent, and so on.

Tavern Names: PCs visit plenty of taverns in their careers, usually in search of information. Traveling PCs stay at a huge number of inns. Keep a list of inn and tavern names handy. Since few people were literate during the medieval era, taverns tended to have visual names that could be easily depicted in painted images or sculptured signs, such as The Red Oak, The Elk and Boar, The Bent Plough, The Mermaid, The Bell and Castle. (See the sidebar on page 98 for one approach to generating names for such places.)

Other shops will usually be named after their proprietors; signage reveals the type of business but not the name. So you can go to your proper name list when identifying armorers, blacksmiths, and other craftsfolk.

Rumors and Red Herrings: Make a list of a dozen or so stories making the rounds of local gossips. Use them when you need conversation filler as PCs talk to NPCs who have little to add to the main plot. If you're running an investigation scenario, be careful not to create anything too interesting; the group might become entranced by a colorful rumor and mistakenly incorporate it into their theory of the case. Especially intriguing rumors might send the group off in search of an improvised adventure, which is great if you're good at running them. Otherwise, make sure that your background detail is less interesting than the main story.

Stats for Spontaneous Urban Opponents: Whether they tend to run afoul of the sheriff's men or skulking thugs, PCs in an urban environment get into fights at the drop of a helmet. Keep game statistics on hand for a group of generic urban opponents for the party. As the group reaches high levels, it should no longer be bothered by ordinary street muscle. Authorities or criminal leaders have to hire specialists to take on the party, in which case you should create a balanced enemy adventuring party ready to take them on. Whatever the group's level, keep these characters available as reactive opponents who strike only when the PCs ask for trouble.

Illus. by K. Andrasofsky

TROUBLESHOOTING

Almost every problem a D&D group encounters boils down to a clash in tastes, compounded by a lack of communication between a DM and the players.

Sometimes DMs feel that their players are playing improperly or even incorrectly. These players prefer style X, but the DM prefers (or thinks the players ought to prefer) style Y. Sometimes the players want a DM to cater more to their wishes, but are rebuffed because the DM places her ideas about game style above the enjoyment of the players.

Throughout this chapter, concrete solutions have been provided that solve most minor problems in a group—providing authority figures for the rabble-rousers to rebel against, allowing supercool characters to be supercool, providing enemies for fight fans to vanquish. These examples are all ways of sharing a general piece of advice you might find useful: Don't fight your players' desires—satisfy them.

Satisfying players does not mean giving away your game. Almost every player wants, over the long run, to be challenged. Power-hungry players might think they want you to immediately rocket them to 20th level, but the fun of that would last only a few moments. Through reasonable in-game effort, the players should be able to experience their chosen emotional thrills on a regular basis.

COMMUNICATION

If you're working to balance all the players' tastes and still having a bad time, it's time to sit down and communicate directly with the players. You might have mistakenly identified your players' tastes.

Most players will be reluctant to offend you. They might be dissatisfied without being able to explain exactly why. Overcome this initial reluctance by asking indirect questions. Ask them to identify their favorite moments in

your game, and the ones that stick out as unsatisfying. If they have had more fun in past campaigns or with another DM, get them to recount their positive experiences there. No matter how constructive it might be, criticism is tough to give and hard to take. By keeping the discussion specific but indirect, you can zero in on your players' true desires without recrimination or hurt feelings.

MEDIATION

Any discussion involving the formation of a plan of action will include differences of opinion between players. When different opinions begin to result in hostility between players, you need to step in, calm flaring tempers, and mediate your way to a happy solution.

The best way to deal with disputes between players is to head them off before they start. Conflicts often arise if players use the game to play out real-world grievances with one another. This sort of conflict, in which sarcastic comments lead to genuine insults and then to a sudden death duel between PCs, tends to occur when players get cranky, bored, or frustrated. By following the techniques in this chapter—keeping up the pace, maintaining focus, balancing player tastes, and calling breaks when the group tires—you should be able to keep these eruptions to a minimum.

If you remember to step in and guide discussions as they begin to founder, you can put emotional distance between the two disputing players. In a detached way, list the pros and cons of each player's approach. Let them use you as a neutral sounding board as they make their arguments. In most cases, doing so defuses the tension enough to prevent hard feelings.

PC-against-PC conflict arising from personal hard feelings between players should always be headed off. These fights lead to even more hard feelings if a PC is seriously hurt or killed, and these conflicts disrupt the fictional illusion of the game when characters fight for no good reason. Such fights usually end in the death of one character, which stops the game as the survivors cart the PC's body off for resurrection or the player rolls up a new character. Noncombatants might feel smugly superior to those who fight each other or, more likely, they grow annoyed. Either way, they add to the group's downward spiraling mood.

When a fight is about to break out, immediately call a break. After the break is over, ask the players if they still want their PCs to fight. Is this dispute really worth the hassle, not to mention the level a dead PC might lose if the fight results in a character's death? If the players still want their PCs to fight, suggest a hefty wager over a nonfatal duel as an alternative.

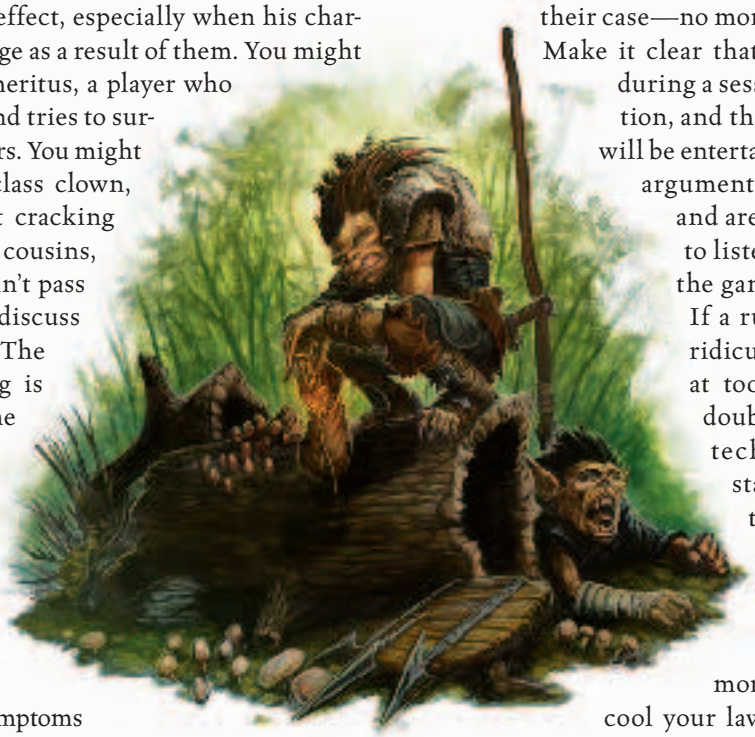
If even this solution won't satisfy them, the dispute is probably about issues between the players that you're in no position to resolve. Ask them one more time to set aside

A young adventurer is about to set foot inside a tavern for the first time

their feud. If they still want their characters to duel to the death, let them have their catharsis; it's better than if they fought in real life.

SELFISHNESS

The one problem you can't solve simply by balancing out varying tastes is that of the disruptive player. On the surface, there might seem to be many species of disruptive player. One example is the rules lawyer, who knows the rules better than you do, constantly quibbles with you about them, and tries to leverage this knowledge to his character's advantage. Another sort of argumentative player focuses not on the rules but on picking apart your rulings on cause and effect, especially when his character is at a disadvantage as a result of them. You might encounter the DM emeritus, a player who usually runs a game and tries to surreptitiously hijack yours. You might have to deal with a class clown, who cares only about cracking the group up, or their cousins, the digressers, who can't pass up an opportunity to discuss unrelated tangents. The dreaded spotlight hog is especially difficult; he wants to talk and act all the time. This player is the first to jump in with a response, the last to relinquish the floor, and is always ready with an interruption.



Illus. by M. Phillippi

Greedy goblins let no one near their treasure

These traits are all symptoms of the same syndrome, expressed in slightly different ways according to the troublemaker's game tastes and personality type. The root problem is selfishness: These players are more interested in attracting attention to themselves, and in fulfilling their own desires, than in contributing to a mutually entertaining game. Lacking a sense of boundaries, they're ready and able to exert pressure on you until you acquiesce to their desires.

People don't change ingrained behavior easily, if at all. Attempts to permanently reform a disruptive player end only in frustration and deepening hostility. Instead, set yourself the goal of efficiently managing the effects of the player's selfishness. Don't get annoyed; try to maintain a sense of wry detachment.

Selfish players are rarely conscious of their behavior, at least while it's occurring. Most don't see themselves as consistently running roughshod over others, and will back off if you call them on their behavior. Muster your best interpersonal skills and deal with them gently, so they don't get defensive, and firmly, so they realize their overbearing behavior won't get them the gratification they want. Look the disruptor in the eye and speak in a calm, low voice. Phrase your request for better behavior in a firm but nonaccusatory manner:

(Cut-Up) "Let's focus, okay?"

(Digresser) "Let's stay on topic."

(Spotlight Hog) "I'll get back to you in a bit. [Other player] hasn't had a chance to act yet."

With rules lawyers, clearly establish the amount of rules discussion you will allow during a game. Give rules lawyers a brief period of time in which to make their case—no more than a minute or two. Make it clear that any ruling you make during a session is final for its duration, and that no further argument will be entertained. Explain that rules arguments slow the game down and are no fun for anyone else to listen to. Keep the spirit of the game in mind as you rule. If a rules lawyer's argument ridiculously favors the player at too low a cost, it is undoubtedly bogus, wording technicalities notwithstanding. Allow players to appeal your rulings only after a session is over, and then preferably by email. (A written response seems more like work and might cool your lawyer's jets.) Warn your players in advance that you'll listen to one further argument or read one email, and then decide conclusively. Rules lawyers are occasionally right; even so, you might instinctively want to refuse them every argument because they drive you crazy. Make sure you give their arguments fair, if quick, consideration.

Respond to other argumentative players in the same way. Though you should never reverse your adjudication of an event, you might review a case and conclude that you made a bad call. If so, affirm the results but tell the player you'll do it differently next time.

If you find that a disruptive player's habits can't be managed, or that it takes too much of your focus to do so, you're faced with the extreme step of uninviting him from your group. Most people put up with mildly selfish players to avoid a decisive confrontation. Doing so is usually the right decision; no game is more important than a friendship.

Illus. by A. Swekel

Chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* provides building blocks you use to construct dungeon, wilderness, and urban adventures. This chapter offers even more encounter and adventure components, such as new traps, rules for adventuring in some archetypal locations and situations, and random encounter tables keyed to sites that often pop up in settings and adventures.

However, a great adventure is more than a collection of encounters—it's a cohesive narrative full of action, suspense, and thorny choices for the player characters. This chapter begins with advice for taking your adventures to the next level, whether the stories are ones you create or published adventures you've purchased.

ADVENTURE PACING

Pacing is a matter of finding the happy medium between full-throttle action and the gradual building of wonder and tension. No adventure should have long periods of description when the PCs are simply listening to you talk, but it shouldn't be nonstop combat, either.

Although adventures resemble short stories or novels in that they tell a story and are written down, they have more similarity to movie screenplays. In fact, treating your adventure like a movie is an excellent way to plan an adventure.

The standard adventure should be easy to split into three acts: a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning lays out the situation and plot of the adventure to the players. Not all secrets and surprises are revealed, but enough of the plot should be apparent that the PCs realize a new adventure is starting. The beginning of an adventure can be as simple as a single roleplaying encounter or as complex as a foray into a bandit lair. As a general rule, the first act should be relatively light on combat; allow the characters time to settle in to the themes and atmosphere of the adventure before rolling for initiative. The beginning act of the adventure should take no more than a single session to play through. If your opening act is more complicated than that, you've gone too far.

The middle act of the adventure is generally the largest of the three. A middle act typically lasts for anywhere from one to a dozen sessions, but can take longer. Still, if your middle act goes on for too long, you run the risk of players losing track of their goals or of them getting distracted and failing to follow through with the primary plot line.

The final act of the adventure, as with the beginning, should not last more than one session. Typically, the final act consists of action that complements the overall theme of the adventure. Usually, this means a large battle with the primary villains of the piece, but it could just as easily be a roleplaying encounter or a complicated puzzle.

The logistics of pacing are difficult to quantify, since they depend on several factors. The players' knowledge of the rules, the number of players, the number of NPCs you have to run, the amount of game time that has passed during the session, and other aspects all combine to complicate the issue.

When designing an adventure, resist the temptation to put in scores of minor encounters. If you have a choice between putting in an encounter that has little to do with the adventure's plot and one that does, you should opt for the one that does. Keep in mind that the D&D rules are designed so that a group of PCs gains a level once every fourteen encounters or so. In this regard, the number of encounters you can run the PCs through is a limited resource. Too many encounters, and the next thing you know, the PCs are too high in level for the final encounter you had meticulously designed to challenge them.

USING PUBLISHED ADVENTURES

A lot of Dungeon Masters only use adventures they create for their own campaigns. They feel that any purchased adventure requires too much work to fit in the campaign world they have so carefully crafted over multiple sessions, that the plots of published adventures lack the color and flavor of their campaigns, or that published adventures deviate too greatly from the grand, overarching plan they have for their campaigns. But with just a little tinkering, a published adventure can be an excellent resource for any DM. Linking one to a larger campaign structure doesn't have to be intimidating or require massive restructuring, and published material provides an excellent resource for the DM with little time to prepare for an upcoming session.

USABLE MATERIAL

Even if you decide that a published adventure doesn't suit your campaign needs as written, a closer look is likely to uncover valuable material. Most published adventures feature professionally rendered maps. Drawing maps is one of the most time-consuming steps in planning an adventure, and pulling a map or a series of maps from a published source can provide you with the foundation for an adventure custom-made for your campaign. Sometimes just looking at the maps can provide the inspiration for a new adventure. Even if you ignore plot, setting, and story details, the maps in the adventure might be worth the price of the entire product.

The generation of NPC statistics is another time-intensive task in constructing a usable adventure. D&D is a game with a heavy foundation in math, and while most DMs eventually become adept at churning out a variety of NPCs with detailed backgrounds and complete statistics, published adventures provide an excellent resource for pregenerated characters. Look for an adventure suitable for the level of the PCs and start flipping. You'll likely encounter plenty of statistics for villains and NPCs you can insert directly into your campaign. Even if the background, personality, or physical description of the NPCs doesn't fit your specific needs, you can easily alter all these things. With the math done for you, you can spend time coming up with interesting flavor to support the new addition to your campaign.

One last tip: If you're looking for lots of NPC statistics, try hunting through urban adventures. Dungeon crawls tend to feature monsters straight out of the *Monster Manual* and other sources, and publishers frequently abbreviate their statistics to save space. But urban adventures provide a higher percentage of classed NPCs, giving you more statistics for your dollar.

LINKING A PUBLISHED ADVENTURE

When you add a published adventure to your ongoing story, you need to consider two important questions: how to connect your current campaign thread, if any, to this inserted adventure, and how to extract the characters from it and divert them back to the main campaign when they're done.

Hook Them In

If you have an opportunity to do so, the best way to link a published adventure to your home-brew campaign is to plant story hooks early on. Two or three sessions before you plan to begin the published adventure, take a look through it and find an NPC, location, or plot point that you can work into the current adventure. These three elements work the best for this purpose, since they're the most modular. (In other words, they can be dropped into a preexisting location or situation with little or no modification needed.)

NPCs can appear and disappear nearly at your whim, provided the players don't believe them to be hostile (thereby provoking a fight). A nonaggressive NPC is a good kind of character to pick up and introduce early. A townsperson who earlier seemed helpful and friendly is likely to gain the characters' ear when it's time to begin the published adventure. But if a fight is more to your liking, use a villainous lackey or two to pick a fight with the characters. A few sessions later, when the PCs are exposed to the hook of the published adventure, allow them to find out that the hook might be connected to the troublemakers they fought a few days earlier. The PCs are likely to be interested in uncovering the connection.

Locations can likewise be effective linking tools. An NPC in the current adventure might mention adventuring in the region you plan on sending the characters to in the published adventure, or the PCs might discover that a major campaign villain comes from the location in question. You could also plant a partial map from the published adventure in the current adventure. Placing it on the person of a main villain is especially likely to pique the player characters' interest.

Plot is perhaps the strongest linking tool of all. Most villains have their hands in a variety of schemes. You could plant a note or an item in a current villain's stronghold that points toward the published adventure; when the characters see a connection later, they are likely to want to pursue it. You might also allow the PCs a chance to overhear a conversation, intercept a message, or just see the current villain conversing with a stranger who is connected to the hook of the published adventure. When you reveal the hook, the characters are that much more likely to bite.

The following example uses each of the elements above. Three sessions before the published adventure (a volcanic dungeon crawl) is to begin, the characters are embroiled in your current homemade adventure. The villain they're pursuing is a nefarious baron who dabbles with dark, necromantic magic and is known to have contacts within the local thieves' guild. As the PCs embark on a mission to snoop around the villain's country estate, they encounter a merchant on the road heading away from the estate, looking pale and in a near-frantic hurry.

The merchant is actually an important NPC lifted from the published adventure to be run in a few sessions. He provides the PCs with good advice about a group of undead lurking up the road, earning their trust. When the merchant later encounters the PCs in the published adventure, they will feel as though they already know him and can trust his information, but more important, his appearance as an important player in this new adventure won't be jarring.

The PCs proceed to the baron's estate and find a partial map on an important cohort of the baron, detailing a dark series of twisting passages and a few chambers with areas marked "Danger! Lava!" Perhaps the map even has notes in the margins mentioning the baron's meeting with a "Dark Master of Fire Magic." The map makes no sense to the characters now, but it's actually the first few chambers of the map from the published adventure. If you can photocopy the map and actually provide a handout, the players will be all the more likely to remember the map later. You've also dropped a plot hint here, indicating a connection between the baron and another evil force, a spellcaster who specializes in fire magic.

Finally, when the PCs return to town after defeating the baron's forces at the estate (or perhaps the baron himself), they find a couple of houses on fire, one of which happens to belong to the helpful merchant from earlier. When that merchant later approaches the PCs with the hook for the published adventure, the PCs feel as though this is a threat they saw coming, and they feel great for putting the pieces together.

Bringing Them Out

Exiting a group of characters from a published adventure is easier than getting them into it. One simple method is to plant a villain from your home-brew campaign in the final encounter of the published adventure, either in addition to or in place of the adventure's villain. You can also use cameo appearances by NPCs from your main campaign in the course of running the published adventure. These appearances remind the characters of their main goals, and you can use them to provide minor clues that lead the characters to the hook for the next adventure.

A jarring exit, in which the characters suddenly learn they've been on an adventure that deviates from the main campaign plot and had nothing to do with their primary goals, can also be very effective. Your main campaign villains look much more nefarious and smart if it seems as though they duped your characters down a false path. This sort of "exit strategy" can be frustrating for the players, however, and is best used sparingly.

SIMPLE FIXES

If you don't have the luxury of advance planning, you can still use simple fixes to insert a published adventure into your current campaign. Discard the published adventure's hook and insert something appropriate to your campaign. The hook doesn't have to openly lead to the adventure. If the PCs think they're pursuing a long-term goal in the campaign because of the hook, and then end up on the published adventure, they probably won't realize they're been sidetracked. Even if they do, you can offer tantalizing clues to keep them thinking they're headed in the right direction (a note, a mural on a wall, or some other clue that ties to your main campaign plot line). Again, as mentioned in Bringing Them Out (see above), your main campaign villains seem all the more powerful and dangerous if the characters think these NPCs are responsible for the diversionary adventure.

The following fairly straightforward changes can help you render published adventures more usable in your home campaign.

Proper Nouns: Players might be less enthusiastic about an adventure that's set in a specific world, such as the Forgotten Realms setting or the Eberron setting, because it features places or people unique to that setting.

Look for nouns beginning with capital letters. Changing these names is extremely easy, and quickly gives an adventure the appropriate tone and feel for your campaign world. It's surprising how big a difference simple name changes can make.

Setting: If you've ever picked up a published adventure, flipped through it quickly, and said, "This adventure is great, but my campaign takes place in the deep jungle, and this one is set in the desert. I can't use this," you're not alone. An adventure won't work if the setting doesn't match, but setting is one of the easiest and quickest things to alter.

Look for key words tied to the setting in descriptive text, and swap out nouns or adjectives for ones that better fit the setting you want. In this way, a hot desert quickly becomes a steamy jungle, while the dungeon ruins you wanted to feature remain the same. These simple alterations can even be done on the fly. Before describing a room to your players, take a quick look through the text and take note of setting-specific words. Read around them or swap them out as needed; your players probably won't even notice.

Structures: Like setting, the style of buildings can be a deterrent to using a published adventure. If you've set your PCs up to expect to explore a lost temple, but an adventure you want to run is set in a monastery, you can make minor changes to descriptions of the monastery to suit your needs.

Make a list of ten elements you associate with a temple (such as a series of training dojos or meditation chambers). From time to time, add one of these flavor elements to a room description. Buildings are fairly interchangeable, requiring only minor adjustments to flavor text with an attention to setting (as described above) to alter them for use in your own unique adventure.

Monsters: Monsters can likewise be changed, if you feel it necessary. If salamanders are the main villains of the desert adventure, consider creatures suitable for the jungle, such as lizardfolk, ettercaps, or yuan-ti.

Pages 318–319 of the *Monster Manual* feature a great resource for swapping monsters: a list of monsters ranked by Challenge Rating. Sometimes, swapping monsters isn't necessary, although it might seem to be. A lost temple populated by fiery salamanders might require a small bit of explanation to justify, but the mystery of the presence of these out-of-place creatures will likely intrigue the players.

Levels: The character level that a published adventure is written for can be one of the most troublesome elements to alter. Check the adventure itself; some feature sidebars detailing ways to scale adventures for characters of multiple levels. But you might look at an adventure designed for 10th-level characters and pass it over if your party is only 5th level, thinking it would be too much work to modify in any significant way.

This is where a good library of published adventures comes in handy. Consider pulling statistics for NPCs and villains from an adventure of the appropriate level and porting them directly into the adventure you want to run. Likewise, use the table on pages 318–319 of the *Monster Manual* to trade monsters of inappropriate CRs for monsters that suit your group's speed. This amount of work for a typical 32-page adventure probably won't take more than an hour, unless you need to add significant numbers of statistics blocks. If that's the case, you can always find monsters of the appropriate CR to sub in for NPCs.

Physical Methods: The best way to make these changes is to insert information directly into the adventure, if a particular change is small enough. For more substantive changes, footnote the portion of the adventure that you want to modify, add to, or delete. The footnote provides you with the information you need to find the secondary source material you want to add to the adventure—whether it' a monster from *Monster Manual III*, a pregenerated NPC from Chapter 5 of this book, or an item or spell of your own creation that's already in your adventure notebook.

A CHANGE OF DIRECTION

Running a published adventure as written can be a way for you to inject some variety, and perhaps some renewed vitality, into your players' game experiences. You can use a published adventure to take the PCs in a drastically different direction. For instance, if your campaign features a lot of battlefield warfare, an adventure that focuses on espionage can be an interesting change of pace. Likewise, if your group tends to favor espionage and stealth-based approaches to adventuring, sending them on a classic dungeon delve can give them an unusual challenge and provide you with a chance to stretch your DM skills. Even the most diehard interaction-oriented players usually enjoy a bit of hack-and-slash from time to time, especially if they believe the adventure has a purpose.

A published adventure might also enable you to take things in a new direction in a quite literal way. If your campaign takes place exclusively underground, suddenly sending the player characters to explore a dark forest or a volcanic mountain range provides a twist, even if the style of adventure is the same.

The adventures that players remember years after a campaign is ended tend to be those that break the mold—adventures that spin them around and turn their world upside down, if only for a brief time. A published adventure used in the middle of an ongoing campaign could turn out to be just such a memorable episode in the lives of the players and their characters.

TRAPS

Traps are a staple of D&D adventures—especially dungeon-based ones—and Chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* details a large number of traps of both mechanical and magic nature: pit traps, hails of needles, flame strike traps, monster summoning traps, and worse can be found on pages 70–74 of that book. Yet these traps are generally simple and generic. The following section presents new traps for your game, Most of them are more complicated

than the traps in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and some of them can be scaled up and down in Challenge Rating.

BOOBY TRAP (CR 1/2)

The booby trap is commonly encountered in kobold lairs, goblin warrens, orc-infested hills, and regions inhabited by savage humanoids. Booby traps, unlike most other traps, are fairly easy to set up. A DC 20 Craft (trapmaking) check and 1 minute of work is all that's required to set up a booby trap.

A trapmaker can rush a booby trap's creation and attempt to craft one as a full-round action, but doing so entails a –10 penalty on the Craft (trapmaking) check. Failure on this check by 5 or more indicates the trapmaker springs the trap and is affected by it.

The components required to build a booby trap vary wildly. Parts can be purchased for 50 gp, or a character can scrounge the parts from the surrounding environment with a successful DC 20 Survival check and 10 minutes of work.

Booby traps are usually CR 1/2 traps. Creating a more dangerous booby trap generally requires powerful magic, or time and resources, or both. Additionally, booby traps on their own aren't a significant difficulty; the true threat arises when the trap-setter uses a booby trap to gain a favorable combat position over the victim. Several sample booby traps are described below.

Kobolds look on from hiding as Lidda falls prey to their booby trap

Alarm: CR 1/2; mechanical device; touch trigger; no reset; bells ring when triggered (nearby enemies make a DC –5 Listen check, modified by distance, to hear the bells); Search DC 15; Disable Device DC 15.

Duster: CR 1/2; mechanical device; touch trigger; no reset; fragile container of fine powder (Atk +5 melee touch, blindness for 1d3 rounds, DC 12 Fortitude negates); Search DC 15; Disable Device DC 15.

Knockback: CR 1/2; mechanical device; touch trigger; no reset; heavy swinging weight makes a bull rush attempt as a Medium creature with 14 Strength; Search DC 15; Disable Device DC 15.

Sticker: CR 1/2; mechanical device; touch trigger; no reset; sharp spike (Atk +6 melee, 1d6); Search DC 15; Disable Device DC 15.

Tripline: CR 1/2; mechanical device; touch trigger; no reset; trip cord makes a trip attempt as a Medium creature with 14 Strength; Search DC 15; Disable Device DC 15.

Weapon Grabber: CR 1/2; mechanical device; touch trigger; no reset; bar or noose attempts to disarm a held object or weapon (Atk +6 as a Medium creature); Search DC 15; Disable Device DC 15.

DUST CLOUD TRAP (CR 4)

When this sort of trap is triggered, a cloud of swirling, blinding, damaging dust is conjured in the area. The trap is more an irritant than anything, but creatures immune to its effects find it particularly useful.

The cloud has several effects. Creatures in the area must make a Fortitude save or be blinded while they remain within the cloud and for 3 rounds afterward. Creatures in the cloud also take 2d6 points of damage each round they remain in the area. Damage reduction of any kind reduces the damage from the swirling, stinging sand. Creatures within the cloud have concealment from other creatures within 5 feet; creatures farther away have total concealment. Ranged attacks from bows, crossbows, or slings made within or through the cloud are deflected as if they passed through a *wind wall* spell effect, and spellcasting while within the cloud requires a Concentration check (DC 15 + spell level).

The dust cloud trap is common among creatures that don't need to rely on normal vision to track intruders, and among creatures naturally resistant to the trap's fairly minor damage. Grimlocks, especially tribes of barbarians, favor the use of this trap. Their blindsight allows

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them to walk directly into the cloud and find enemies despite those enemies' concealment. Such tribes favor the Spring Attack feat, which minimizes the damage they take, or they fight with reach weapons from the edge of the conjured cloud.

Dragons likewise favor this sort of trap. Their scales are hard enough to negate the damage of the cloud, and their blindsense enables them to locate enemies accurately enough for breath weapons or area spells. Any creature with blindsight could use this trap to guard a lair, especially those that favor melee attacks, since the cloud is so disruptive to ranged or spell attacks.

Dust Cloud Trap: CR 4; magic device; location trigger; automatic reset; magic effect (conjured cloud of swirling sand lasts for 5 rounds, blindness while in cloud and for 3 rounds afterward, Fortitude DC 14 negates blindness, 2d6 points of damage, damage reduction of any kind applies, creatures in cloud have concealment within 5 feet and total concealment beyond, ranged attacks in cloud are deflected, casting spells requires Concentration check (DC 15 + spell level); Caster level 5th; Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28. *Cost:* 3,200 gp, 282 XP.

ENERVATION/ENERGY DRAIN TRAP (CR VARIABLE)

Enervation and its higher-level version, *energy drain,* are powerful and deadly spell effects. It's no real surprise, then, that an enterprising wizard or sorcerer created a trap to feature their potent magic.

Several versions of this trap exist. The most basic form is a single *enervation* ray. From there, multiple *enervation* rays, firing at multiple targets, make the trap more deadly, until at its most powerful *energy drain* replaces the enervation effect. Some of these traps use location triggers, while others have proximity or touch triggers.

Creatures that favor this trap would usually have immunity to negative energy, making this a prime device for intelligent undead to use in their lairs. Liches and vampires, especially, find the trap to their liking, since the enervating effects weaken potent foes before the undead face them personally.

Enervation/Energy Drain Traps

CR	Spell	No. of Rays	Negative Levels	Caster Level
5	*enervation*	1	1d4	7th
7	*enervation*	2	1d4 (two targets)	7th
7	empowered *enervation*	1	1d4+1/2	11th
9	chained *enervation**	1	1d4 (primary), 1d2 (secondary)	15th
10	*energy drain*	1	2d4	17th
12	*energy drain*	2	2d4 (two targets)	17th

*While this version of the trap fires only a single ray, the primary ray branches out from the first target, striking all other creatures within 30 feet of the first. These secondary targets, if struck, gain only half as many negative levels as the primary target.

Enervation Trap: CR 5; magical device; proximity trigger (target within 40 ft.); automatic reset; spell effect (*enervation,* 7th-level wizard, Atk +10 ranged touch, 1d4 negative levels); Search DC 29; Disable Device DC 29. *Cost:* 12,000 gp, 1,120 XP.

Chained Enervation Trap: CR 9; magical device; proximity trigger (target within 60 ft.); automatic reset; spell effect (*enervation,* 15th-level wizard, Atk +14 ranged touch, 1d4 negative levels at first target, Atk +14 ranged touch, 1d2 negative levels at every creature within 30 ft. of first target); Search DC 29; Disable Device DC 29. *Cost:* 30,000 gp, 2,400 XP.

Energy Drain Trap: CR 10; magical device; proximity trigger (target within 65 ft.); automatic reset; spell effect (*energy drain,* 17th-level wizard, Atk +15 ranged touch, 2d4 negative levels); Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 34. *Cost:* 76,500 gp, 6,120 XP.

FEY RING (CR 4, 7, OR 10)

Fey rings are chaotic and dangerous, concentrated wells of unpredictable magic found only in areas where fey are commonly encountered. A fey ring typically appears as an arrangement of small, pallid mushrooms growing in a 30-foot-radius ring. A character with the nature sense ability can identify a fey ring with a Knowledge (nature) or Survival check as if she were a rogue using Search to find traps.

A fey ring affects anyone who steps inside the ring with a random, potent magic effect. Worse, it exudes a strange mental lure out to a distance of 300 feet; any creature that approaches to within 300 feet must make a DC 20 Will save or become compelled to walk toward the fey ring and enter it. Once the victim enters the fey ring, this compulsion vanishes and can't affect him again until the next sunrise.

If a nonfey character enters a fey ring, roll d10 and consult the table below to determine what sort of fell magic effect targets the character.

A fey creature (including any creature with at least one level of druid that makes its saving throw against the randomly determined magic effect of the fey ring) that enters a fey ring is suffused with beneficial energy and gains a +4 sacred bonus to its Charisma score for 1d6 hours. A creature can gain this bonus only once in a 24-hour period.

The random magic effects generated by a fey ring depend on the nature of the ring. Minor fey rings generate the equivalent of a 2nd-level spell cast at caster level 5th; moderate fey rings the equivalent of a 5th-level spell cast at caster level 10th; and major fey rings the equivalent of an 8th-level spell cast at caster level 20th. Spell effects that normally affect an area only affect the creature.

You can easily generate alternative lists of random effects for other spell levels.

Fey Ring Effects

d10	Minor (CR 4) (DC 13)	Moderate (CR 7) (DC 17)	Major (CR 10) (DC 22)
1	*Blindness/ deafness*	*Mind fog*	*Finger of death*
2	*Scare*	*Summon nature's ally V*	*Reverse gravity*
3	*Daze monster*	*Song of discord*	*Whirlwind*
4	*Hold person*	*Baleful polymorph*	*Maze*
5	*Hypnotic pattern*	*Insect plague*	*Otto's irresistible dance*
6	*Chill metal*	*Wall of thorns*	*Power word stun*
7	*Summon swarm*	*Flame strike*	*Scintillating pattern*
8	*Gust of wind*	*Plane shift*	*Horrid wilting*
9	*Summon nature's ally II*	*Slay living*	*Summon nature's ally VIII*
10	*Sound burst*	*Feeblemind*	*Temporal stasis*

The DC given for each type of fey ring indicates the save DC to resist the spell's effects, if a save is allowed.

Fey Ring: CR 4, 7, or 10; magic trap; location trigger; automatic reset; randomly determined magic effect; Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 30. *Cost (minor):* 3,000 gp, 240 XP. *Cost (moderate):* 22,500 gp, 1,800 XP. *Cost (major):* 60,000 gp, 4,800 XP.

FIRE SUMMONING TRAP (CR VARIABLE)

This dangerous magical and mechanical device is typically used to trap an entire room or corridor. At its most basic, the trap consists of two elements. The first involves a flammable gas expelled from hidden vents in the floor. Small alchemical lighters also concealed beneath the floor ignite when the trap is sprung and the gas released, causing the trapped area to erupt in flame. The flames continue to billow throughout the area to a height of 5 feet for at least 1 minute (10 rounds), at which point the gas supply is usually exhausted. Targets in the area are entitled to Reflex saves each round to halve the fire damage.

The second element of the trap also poses a great threat. In the round after the flame in the room ignites, a fire elemental (or more than one) is summoned into the chamber. The summoning apparatus is triggered by the same mechanism that releases the gas. As a result, disabling the gas mechanism also prevents the elemental from being summoned.

The table below provides the details for multiple versions of the trap, and two sets of sample statistics follow the table. The CRs assume the PCs can leap clear of the fire and do not have to simply stand and endure the fire damage for the 1-minute duration. If the PCs cannot escape the flames, or if escape is difficult (the trap is at the bottom of a pit, for example), the CR should be increased significantly (by at least 2, and possibly more).

Fire Summoning Traps

CR	Damage	Reflex DC	Elemental(s)	Caster Level
5	5d6	14	1 Small	5th
6	7d6	15	1d3 Small	9th
7	8d6	15	1 Medium	9th
8	8d6	15	1d3 Medium	11th
9	11d6	16	1 Large	11th
10	11d6	16	1d3 Large	13th
11	13d6	17	1 Huge	13th
12	13d6	17	1d3 Huge	15th
13	15d6	18	1 greater	15th
14	15d6	18	1d3 greater	17th
15	17d6	19	1 elder	17th

Fire Summoning Trap: CR 5; magic and mechanical device; location trigger; manual reset; alchemical effect (5d6 fire, 20-foot radius for 10 rounds, DC 14 Reflex half) and spell effect (summoned Small fire elemental after 1 round, stays for 5 rounds); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28. *Cost:* 15,000 gp, 600 XP.

Fire Summoning Trap: CR 9; magic and mechanical device; location trigger; manual reset; alchemical effect (11d6 fire, 20-foot radius for 10 rounds, DC 16 Reflex half) and spell effect (summoned Large fire elemental after 1 round, stays for 11 rounds); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32. *Cost:* 49,500 gp, 2,640 XP.

HAUNTING TRAP (CR 5)

Haunting traps typically appear in areas where undead are found: graveyards, haunted houses, evil abandoned temples, and the like. They are never consciously created. Rather, they are the result of powerful emotions that have infused an area with raw spiritual power. Since haunting traps are mind-affecting, creatures with immunity to such effects (such as intelligent constructs, undead, and the like) use them to gain an advantage over their prey.

Haunting traps are magic traps, and in a way, they are undead as well. Both *detect magic* and *detect undead* can reveal the aura of a haunting trap (the aura is of moderate strength), but these spells do not reveal the source of the aura, since it suffuses the area entirely. A haunting trap is keyed to an alignment as well (most, but not all haunting traps, are lawful evil), so the appropriate spells that detect alignments can also serve to identify a trap's aura.

A haunting trap covers a 30-foot radius, usually in the shape of a hemisphere resting on the surface of the ground but sometimes as a sphere centered on a point in space. Since a haunting trap is created when a creature in the throes of a particularly powerful emotion is killed, a body of some sort is often in evidence inside the area unless the trap is particularly old or creatures use the area as a hunting ground.

Any creature within the area of a haunting trap immediately notices a sudden drop in temperature. Additionally, the creature must make a DC 20 Will saving throw

or become affected by the haunting's emotional power. Each haunting is focused on a specific emotion, but the game effect always duplicates one of the following spells: *confusion*, *crushing despair*, *enthrall*, *fear*, or *Tasha's hideous laughter*. Rare haunting traps have beneficial effects such as *rage* or even *good hope*, but most have negative effects. These effects manifest at caster level 10th.

A haunting trap bolsters undead, even if the trap's alignment is good. An undead creature within the influence of a haunting trap receives a +2 insight bonus to its Armor Class and on Will saving throws, and +2 to the DC of any mind-affecting special attacks the undead has.

Since haunting traps are, on some level, themselves undead, they can be bypassed or destroyed by a cleric who channels positive energy. Treat the haunting as a 10 HD undead; if a cleric manages to turn it, the trap is rendered inactive for 1 minute. If a cleric destroys it, the trap is forever disarmed.

Haunting: CR 5; magic trap; location trigger; automatic reset; *confusion*, *crushing despair*, *enthrall*, *fear*, or *Tasha's hideous laughter* (Will DC 20 negates); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25 or turn (see above). *Cost:* 14,000 gp, 1,120 XP.

HOBBLING TRAP (CR 6)

This mechanical trap is one of the few kinds that has lasting repercussions for its victims. When it is triggered (always by means of a pressure plate or similar trigger, based on a creature passing over the trap on foot), razor-sharp, 10-inch-long barbed spikes erupt from the floor into the feet of those in the trapped area. Creatures struck by the spikes take damage, and the barbs keep them pinned in place. Pinned creatures are immobile but not helpless, taking a –4 penalty to their AC. The trap resets only after each creature in the target area moves clear. Most often, the trigger for the trap is placed in the middle of the trapped area so that it affects as many creatures as possible.

Pulling free of the spikes is painful, requiring a Strength check (DC 20, + 1 per spike that damaged the creature). A creature that pulls free takes damage from each spike that damaged it again as the barbs tear at its feet. In addition, any creature damaged by a hobbling trap is reduced to one-half speed because its foot is wounded. This movement penalty lasts for 24 hours, until the creature is treated (DC 15 Heal check) or it receives at least 1 point of magical healing.

Versions of this trap feature spikes made of special materials such as adamantine or alchemical silver, depending on the nature of creature the creator was warding against. Other versions feature magically enhanced spikes with greater attack and damage bonuses, increased critical threat ranges, or even the wounding weapon special ability, resulting in continued damage even after a creature pulls free. The CR of these variations could increase from +1 to +3.

Monsters that don't need to walk make use of this trap in their lairs. Beholders particularly enjoy rigging a few hobbling traps in their homes, as do dragons. Creatures with the capability to cast *alarm* often rig the spell to coincide with the triggering of the trap so they can be alerted when someone sets it off. Such creatures enjoy the opportunity to rain destruction down on targets pinned to the floor by the barbed spikes.

Hobbling Trap: CR 6; mechanical device; location trigger; automatic reset; floor spikes (Atk +16 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+4 each); hobbling barbs (creatures damaged by spikes are pinned and must make Strength check, DC 20 + 1 per spike that damaged it, to pull free; damaged creatures are hobbled as by caltrops); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20. *Market Price:* 8,200 gp.

SEPARATION WALL TRAP (CR VARIABLE)

This mechanical device is not a trap on its own, but an addition to other traps to make them deadlier. A separation wall trap is simply a reasonably thick (often no more than 1 foot) stone or iron wall that quickly slides into place when triggered. It is used to separate invading groups, triggering behind the creature that activates it and separating that creature from its companions. The trap can also seal off an exit to prevent an intruder from seeking safety from another threat.

A separation wall can be built to slide out from a wall, the floor, or the ceiling of a chamber, and when activated it always fits flush against the other surfaces of the surrounding passage or room.

Separation Wall Trap: CR 1*; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; sliding wall (used to separate groups or make other traps more deadly, DC 20 Reflex save allows adjacent creature to jump to the opposite side of the wall before it seals); Search DC 20*; Disable Device DC 20*. *Market Price:* 1,000 gp.

A nastier version of the separation wall trap features long, razor-sharp spikes or blades that pop out of the wall once it slams into place. They can potentially affect any creatures in squares adjacent to the separation wall.

Separation Blade-Wall Trap: CR 3*; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; sliding wall (used to separate groups or make other traps deadlier, DC 20 Reflex save allows adjacent creature to jump to the opposite side of the wall before it seals) and blades (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 blades per target for 1d4+2 each); Search DC 20*; Disable Device DC 20*. *Market Price:* 3,200 gp.

*If used in conjunction with another trap, increase the base trap's CR rather than counting this as a separate encounter. The CR should increase by at least 1, but if the base trap's danger is dramatically increased, the addition of a separation wall could increase the CR by as much as 4 (such as if it's used in conjunction with a crushing wall

trap, described on page 74 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, or the CR 15 version of the fire summoning trap, above). In addition, if used in conjunction with another trap, the separation wall's Search and Disable Device DCs are equal to the base trap's or 20, whichever is higher.

SPELL TURRET (CR 2–10)

A spell turret is a highly dangerous magic trap that blurs the line between trap and construct. Powerful wizards use spell turrets to guard important reaches of their guild or tower. Priests install them in the burial vaults of particularly favored devotees.

A spell turret is generally located at one end of a long hallway or room, and is mounted on a wall, floor, or ceiling. When inactive, the turret merges with the material of the surface on which it is mounted and cloaks itself with a *nondetection* spell to hide its magical aura. A spell turret has a visual trigger that utilizes *true seeing* to a range of 120 feet; it can be programmed to recognize creatures by creature type, creature race, or even specific individuals. Creatures the spell trigger recognizes do not trigger it by approaching within 120 feet, nor does the spell trigger ever target them once it is activated. If a spell trigger casts an area spell, recognized targets might accidentally suffer the effect of the spell if they are in the wrong place at the wrong time. Programming a spell turret to recognize a new type, race, or individual (or removing a type, race, or individual from memory) requires 8 hours of work by a spellcaster with the Craft Wondrous Item feat, but does not cost gold pieces or experience points.

If a spell turret detects an unrecognized target, it immediately activates. When it does, it emerges from the wall quickly and quietly with a flash of colorful light; each spell turret looks different, since their creators personalize them. One turret might resemble a crystal lance, another a leering gargoyle, and still another an outstretched arm.

All four of the stored spells in a spell turret must be of the same level, from the same spell list, and from different schools. Once activated, a spell turret immediately begins casting one of the four spells stored within it at the rate of one spell per round, pausing only on every fifth round to magically repair 4d8+20 points of damage to itself. A turret targets the closest unrecognized creature, and has a 360-degree arc of fire. A spell turret's caster level is always equal to the caster level at which the stored spells are available; thus, a spell turret that fires 3rd-level cleric spells does so at caster level 5th, and one that fires 6th-level bard spells does so at caster level 16th. The order in which a turret casts its spells is set; it cycles through them in the same order each time. A spell turret's CR equals the level of spells it fires +1.

Spell Turret: CR 1 + spell level; Diminutive magic device; visual trigger (*true seeing*); automatic reset; four different spell effects cast once per round in set order, no spells cast every fifth round but spell turret self-repairs 4d8+20 hp; Search DC 25 + spell level; Disable Device DC 25 + spell level; AC 7; hardness equal to material turret is mounted on (minimum 5); hp 200.

Common spell turret spell selections include the following.

Burial Vault Spell Turret (7th-level cleric spells): *Dictum*, *repulsion*, *destruction*, *summon monster VII*. *Cost:* 45,500 gp, 3,640 XP.

Sacred Grove Spell Turret (5th-level druid spells): *Summon nature's ally V* (to summon an animal), *stoneskin* (on summoned animal), *animal growth* (on summoned animal), *call lightning storm*. *Cost:* 22,500 gp, 1,800 XP.

Treasure Vault Spell Turret (4th-level wizard spells): *Confusion*, *phantasmal killer*, *fear*, *ice storm*. *Cost:* 14,000 gp, 1.120 XP.

Wizard's Guild Spell Turret (9th-level wizard spells): *Energy drain*, *meteor swarm*, *power word kill*, *imprisonment*. *Cost:* 76,500 gp, 6,120 XP.

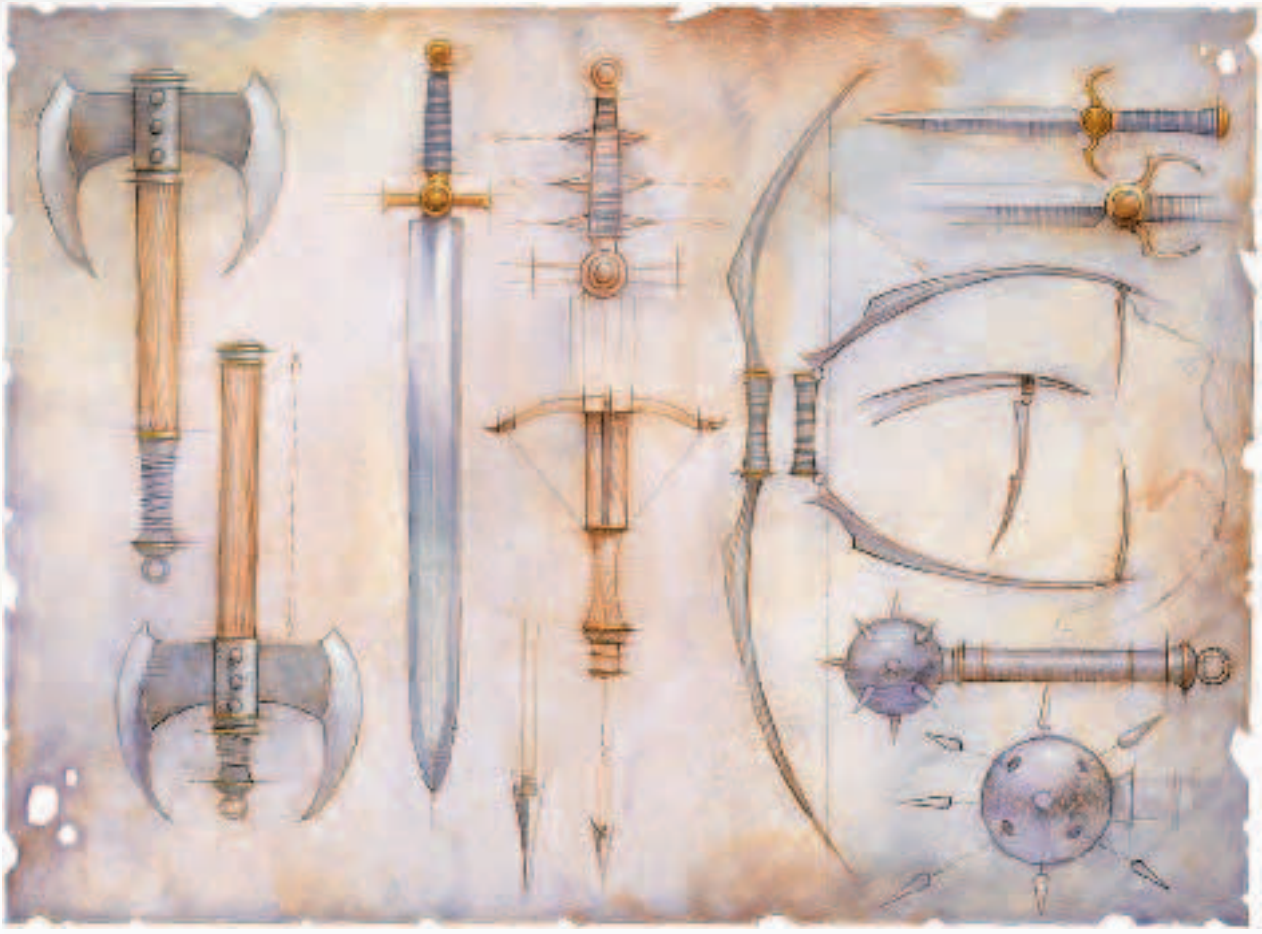
TRAPPED WEAPONS (CR 2+)

The discovery of powerful magic weapons in a monster's hoard is a Dungeons & Dragons staple. Unfortunately, the smarter monsters usually figure this out, and lay traps to combat the theft of their treasures. Some monsters seed their treasure with cursed items. Others use spells such as *glyph of warding* to protect favorite items.

Particularly mean-spirited creatures (such as kobolds) take this one step further and trap the weapons themselves. Unless the trap is spotted, the weapon itself seems normal and perfectly functional. The first time it is used (usually in combat), the trap springs. Trapped weapons fall apart dramatically, dealing no damage to a creature they are used against: A sword crumbles into pieces, a bow breaks in half as its string is drawn back, an axe head flies loose and shatters. As the weapon breaks, the handle breaks open as well, allowing a large number of spring-loaded spikes and hooks to burst out and into the wielder's hands.

The trapped weapon detailed below is a standard example. If the trapmaker can afford it, applying poison to a trapped weapon's hidden spikes and hooks is a highly effective way to increase its lethality. Trapped weapons are typically masterwork weapons; only very rarely are they magic weapons, since the activation of the trap destroys the weapon. *Nystul's magic aura* is an effective way to make a trapped weapon look magic. Monsters with specific types of damage reduction often trap weapons of the appropriate material and leave them in obvious locations in their lairs, perhaps as trophies. A werewolf, for example, might seed his cottage with trapped silver longswords.

If a rogue successfully disarms a trapped weapon, it can be used as a standard weapon of its type. Resetting the weapon to be trapped requires a second successful Disable Device check.



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Trapped weapons come in all shapes and sizes

Trapped Weapon: CR 2; mechanical device; touch trigger; repair reset; spikes (2d6 damage, Reflex DC 20 negates); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 20. *Market Price:* 3,000 gp.

WATER SUMMONING TRAP (CR VARIABLE)

Like the fire summoning trap described above, this trap combines nonmagical and magical elements. At its most basic, a water summoning trap, when triggered, begins to rapidly fill a room with water. Based on the construction (and CR) of the trap, the room might fill only partially with water, slowing movement for creatures unaccustomed to a watery environment, or it might fill entirely, as is the case with the water-filled room trap described on page 73 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. These traps always affect a closed-off room or a sunken chamber, so the water doesn't escape. They are frequently combined with separation wall traps (see above).

In addition to the water, each version of the water summoning trap summons one or more water elementals. These creatures attack until slain or for the duration of the summoning effect.

The size and number of elementals summoned varies, depending on the depth of the water in the trap and the trap's Challenge Rating.

As borne out by the table above, water in these traps typically fills the trapped area to one of four depths: 1 foot, 4 feet, 10 feet, or to the ceiling. In a room with a 10-foot ceiling, there's no difference between a 10-foot-deep version of the trap and one in which the water fills the room to the ceiling. The 10-foot-deep version assumes it is located in an area that has a ceiling high enough for a Medium or smaller creature to tread water and still be able to breathe. The effects of the different water depths are as follows.

1 Foot Deep: As in a shallow bog (see page 88 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), movement in this depth of water costs 2 squares for each square traversed, and the DC of Tumble checks in such an area increases by 2.

4 Feet Deep: As in a deep bog (see page 88 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), it costs Medium creatures 4 squares of movement to move into a square with this depth of water. Small or smaller creatures must swim, and tumbling is impossible. The water provides cover for Medium creatures, while smaller creatures gain improved cover (+8 to AC, +4 bonus on Reflex saves). Medium or larger creatures can crouch to gain this improved cover, but any creatures gaining the

benefit of the improved cover take a –10 penalty on attacks against creatures that aren't underwater.

10 Feet Deep: Water of this depth is treated as calm water. Creatures of Medium size or smaller must make DC 10 Swim checks each round to move through. Characters that fail a check must hold their breath or begin drowning (see page 304 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). When underwater, characters can move in any direction as if flying with perfect maneuverability. Creatures fighting while in water of this depth must contend with the combat modifiers found in Table 3–22: Combat Adjustments Underwater, page 92 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, even if their opponents are not also in the water (swinging a sword at a flying opponent, or one standing on land, is as difficult as swinging one at an opponent in the water). Creatures out of the water gain the benefit of higher ground against creatures in the water (+1 bonus on melee attack rolls).

Ceiling: This trap functions exactly as the water-filled room trap, page 73 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, with the added complication of the summoned creatures.

The tables below provide the details for multiple versions of the trap, and a set of sample statistics follows the tables.

Water Summoning Traps

Elemental Size	Caster Level
Small	5th
Medium or 1d3 Small	9th
Large or 1d3 Medium	11th
Huge or 1d3 Large	13th
Greater or 1d3 Huge	15th
Elder or 1d3 greater	17th

	Elemental Size					
Water Depth	S	M or 1d3 S	L or 1d3 M	H or 1d3 L	G or 1d3 H	E or 1d3 G
1 ft.	CR 5	CR 7	CR 8	CR 9	CR 10	CR 11
4 ft.	CR 6	CR 8	CR 9	CR 10	CR 11	CR 12
10 ft.	CR 6	CR 9	CR 10	CR 11	CR 12	CR 13
Ceiling	CR 7	CR 10	CR 11	CR 12	CR 13	CR 14

Water Summoning Trap: CR 8; magic and mechanical device; location trigger; manual reset; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. room, which fills to a 4-ft. depth) and spell effect (1d3 summoned Small water elementals after 1 round, stay for 9 rounds); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30. *Cost:* 22,500 gp, 1,800 XP.

ARCHETYPAL LOCATIONS

After a while, even the most gung-ho group will grow tired of yet another in a series of nameless dungeons with doors to be kicked in, orcs to be slain, and treasure chests to be opened. Fantasy literature is full of exciting adventures that feature climactic encounters everywhere from the raging caldera of a volcano to the sinister calm of an ancient crypt. Consider using the following locations to spice up the adventures you create.

BATTLE IN THE SKY

Aerial battles create vivid images of daring and danger that can stick with your players for the length of a campaign. Whether their characters are fighting on rooftops, along castle battlements, or even on an airship, the heightened tension caused by the threat of a potential lethal fall makes for a great deal of fun. Such battles also allow characters to use combat maneuvers they might otherwise not consider, such as bull rushes. When running a battle in a high location, you need to consider several elements.

Height

The altitude of the combatants determines not only how much damage a falling character takes, but in extremely lofty environments, how long it takes a falling character to reach the ground. This latter piece of information might not seem important, but a *feather fall* spell lasts for only 1 round per level, and a character who casts the spell too soon might end up taking full falling damage as if the spell had never been cast.

A falling character reaches terminal velocity (roughly 130 miles per hour, or nearly 200 feet per second) within the first round of a long fall. That means a character falls roughly 670 feet in the first round. After that, a character falls about 1,150 feet each round. If a fall is from a great height and lasts several rounds, a character using *feather fall* needs to wait to cast the spell until impact is imminent, since the short duration might mean the spell expires before the character touches down safely. In general, a character must activate the effect within the last round before impact would occur. The exact distance from the ground can vary greatly depending on the caster level of the *feather fall* (a 1st-level caster must activate with only 60 feet to spare or take damage, while a 20th-level caster could activate the spell at a height of 1,200 feet and touch down safely), but for simplicity's sake, allowing a character to simply specify that she is waiting until the last round of her fall before activating the effect is both fair and expeditious.

Footing

With the danger of a fall at hand, players become focused on precision when moving their characters in combat. On most types of terrain, characters shouldn't need to make Balance checks to maintain their footing. However, high terrain features patches of tricky footing that require Balance checks, if only to heighten the feeling of danger.

Scree—shifting gravel—doesn't affect movement, as described on page 89 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. However, when combat occurs on scree near the edge of a precipice, consider forcing a choice on the characters (and NPCs or enemy creatures, as well). Each combatant must make a

DC 10 Balance check each round it fights on scree while adjacent to the edge of a drop. Failure means a character slips over the edge, but can make a DC 15 Reflex save to catch himself. If combatants are fighting on a slope that contains scree, the Balance check DC is 12 (gradual slope) or 15 (steep slope).

Characters can eliminate the need for the Balance check if they take a penalty on their attack rolls made when fighting in these conditions. The penalty is –2 on flat ground, –4 on scree on a gradual slope, and –6 on a steep slope. With this rule, characters who have little or no Balance skill (or large armor check penalties) can choose stability and safety (at least from falling) at the expense of less accuracy. Other types of terrain can force similar checks, including loose marbles or ball bearings on the ground, an oil spill, or ground vibration due to an earthquake or potent magical effect.

Guardrails reduce the danger of falling in high environments. Balance checks made near a guardrail drop to DC 5. Guardrails (hardness 5, hp 10, break DC 18) typically aren't very strong, however, and might shatter under repeated strain or under the impact of weapon blows. A creature using the bull rush maneuver (see below) to push a character against a guardrail can attempt a free DC 18 Strength check as part of the action to burst the railing and push his opponent right through. Success means the guardrail gives way, but the creature being pushed receives a DC 15 Reflex save to grab the edge before plummeting to the ground.

Bull Rush, Grappling, and Magic

The bull rush maneuver consistently proves the most effective combat maneuver when fighting near a drop. Even if a character or creature lacks the Improved Bull Rush feat, it might be worth provoking an attack of opportunity to end a fight quickly by sending an enemy plunging into a deep abyss. The presence of guardrails near a drop-off can make bull rush attempts more difficult. Creatures attempting to resist a bull rush that would push them through or over a guardrail gain a +4 bonus on checks to resist.

Another potentially lethal tactic involves grappling an opponent. If a creature manages to grapple a foe and pin her, the creature can then move near edge of a precipice and drop or throw the pinned creature over the side. Doing so requires a successful grapple check, followed by a DC 15 Strength check. Succeeding on the grapple check but failing the Strength check means the creature retains hold of the grappled opponent, but she is no longer pinned and does not go over the side. Failure on the grapple check means the opponent is still pinned but doesn't go over the side.

Telekinesis (and similar types of magic) becomes a potent force in these battles. It provides arcane casters a way to potentially end the combat quickly.

Finally, remember that on stairs, rooftops, or other sloped terrain, characters can gain the +1 bonus on melee attacks for gaining the advantage of higher ground against an opponent.

BURNING BUILDING

In the real world, cities pay firefighters to rescue civilians from burning buildings. These brave individuals risk their lives to enter a house on fire to bring victims out. In a D&D world, people are rarely so lucky. If the PCs are ever unfortunate enough to be caught in a building when it catches on fire, they might find themselves in the difficult position of trying to find their way out through smoke- and flame-filled rooms. Conversely, they might act the part of firefighters themselves, putting themselves in harm's way to rescue unconscious or panicked citizens. After all, how many fantasy towns actually feature anything like a contemporary fire department?

A building might be fully or partially engulfed in fire. If it is fully ablaze, smoke and heat dangers are constant in every room, although smoke is concentrated on upper floors (see Smoke, below). If it is partially ablaze, sections of the structure are safe for travel, and the characters need worry only about the part of the building currently on fire. In such an instance, assume that the fire engulfs another 10-foot-by-10-foot area of the building in each passing minute. Fires can move faster or slower as you desire; pick a rate that keeps tension high but still gives the PCs a chance to be heroes. Fires are most effective as threats for lower-level parties that don't have access to spells that grant great resistance to smoke or fire, or that lack flight and teleport magic.

When the characters first enter a burning building, have them roll initiative. Although they're not necessarily entering combat, establishing an initiative order helps when you need to track a fire's progress or the damage the PCs take.

Smoke

As described on page 304 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, a creature that breathes heavy smoke must make a Fortitude save (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or spend a round choking and coughing. A creature that chokes for 2 consecutive rounds takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. Smoke also provides concealment to any creatures within it. Finally, it makes Search checks (such as those made to find unconscious civilians or companions) difficult. Search checks in smoke are made at a –4 penalty. See Rescue, below, for Search DCs for finding unconscious victims of fires.

Heat

As stated on page 303 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, extreme heat (such as in a fire) deals lethal damage. Creatures breathing the air in these conditions take 1d6 points of lethal damage per minute. A character must also make a Fortitude save every 5 minutes (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or take an additional 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. Wearing

armor or heavy clothing imposes a –4 penalty on the save, and those wearing metal armor or who come into contact with hot metal are affected as if by a *heat metal* spell.

Finally, remember that a creature that takes any nonlethal damage from heat exposure suffers from heatstroke and is fatigued. The character suffers from this fatigue until healed of the nonlethal damage.

Hazards

A burning building holds further hazards than fire and smoke. Building structures grow weak as fire eats away at their supports, and floors and ceilings can collapse around the unwary. Some buildings also contain hazardous chemicals or explosive materials (granaries, for instance, are notorious firetraps due to the grain dust filling the air), and every building with little ventilation might hold a deadly backdraft. In areas of a building that are on fire, a character has a 10% chance of encountering one of the hazards described below. This chance increases by 10% for each minute a room has been on fire, to a maximum hazard encounter chance of 50%. If a hazard is present, roll d20 and consult the following table.

d20	Hazard
1–5	Collapsing floor
6–13	Collapsing ceiling
14–16	Explosion
17–20	Backdraft

Collapsing Floor: Collapsing floors can be resolved like a pit trap. Allow a character in a room with a collapsing floor a DC 15 Reflex save to leap clear. Failure indicates the character falls to the story below, taking 1d6 points of falling damage per 10 feet that he falls, along with 2d6 points of fire damage. He is liable to take further fire damage in ensuing rounds, as described in Heat, above, unless he finds a way out of the new chamber, which might or might not be in flames itself.

Collapsing Ceiling: Collapsing ceilings also allow a character a DC 15 Reflex save to leap free, but the results of failure are even more terrifying. Failure means the character takes 2d6 points of damage and 2d6 points of fire damage from the falling debris. He is also buried beneath the ceiling debris. A buried creature takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage and 2d6 points of fire damage per round. Getting free requires a DC 20 Strength check (the DC might be higher if you decide that something particularly heavy fell on the character from above).

Explosion: Many buildings, even normal homes, hold substances that don't mix well with fire. An oil supply or a cloud of grain dust might catch fire, or maybe an alchemical formula is exposed to too much heat. Explosions vary in severity based on their cause. At minimum, an explosion deals 3d6 points of fire damage in a 20-foot-radius burst. More severe explosions mimic the effects of *fireball* spells, dealing 5d6 points of fire damage or more. A good rule of thumb is to set the number of damage dice of the explosion equal to the level of the party (maximum of 10d6 for a group of 10th level or higher).

Explosions might deal more than fire damage. If a room holds items that can be turned into shrapnel, consider adding another 2d6 points of damage to the burst. Such shrapnel might include pieces of metal (jewelry), glass (from windows or display cases), or wood (from multiple small pieces of furniture).

Backdraft: A backdraft occurs when a fire burns very hot, but has little or no oxygen. When a source of oxygen is suddenly introduced into the area, fire erupts from the source of heat, engulfing the unwary and causing terrible burns. A backdraft works like an explosion, but careful characters can check for its presence (unlike with an explosion). A DC 20 Search check on a door or wall near a potential backdraft can warn a character that entering the room is not a good idea until it is ventilated first. Likewise, a DC 25 Spot check near a potential backdraft site results in a character noticing small wisps of smoke being sucked beneath a door or into cracks in the walls, floor, or ceiling as the backdraft prepares to ignite if given an appropriate amount of oxygen. A backdraft explosion deals 5d6 points of fire damage in a 30-foot-radius spread (Reflex DC 15 half).

Other Hazards: Unique environments might contain unusual hazards. At a wizards' laboratory, all manner of odd creatures might be trying to flee the fire. Glass equipment would be exploding, dangerous materials melting, and toxic clouds of gas forming as a result of certain substances melting or mixing together. Depending on the nature of a particular burning building, add one or more hazards of your own to the table above.

Rescue

A burning building is most effective as a dramatic element if innocent townsfolk are at risk inside. Entering the building to rescue the citizens lets the characters feel heroic and gives them opportunities to receive civic awards for bravery.

To find a conscious citizen inside a burning building, a PC can make a DC 15 Search check (taking 10 and taking 20 are not allowed). Success means a civilian has been located. Remember to apply the –4 penalty on Search checks for smoke, if it's a factor at the time. This check takes at least 5 rounds to perform, unlike normal Search checks, since it represents a character combing through multiple rooms, trying to pinpoint the source of a faint noise or locate rooms likely to hold people. For each increment of 5 by which the check result exceeds 15, reduce the number of rounds by 1. A successful DC 15 Listen check also reduces the number of rounds spent searching by 1, as coughing citizens inadvertently lead the characters to their location. Finally, a DC 20 Knowledge (architecture

and engineering) can reduce the search time by 1 round, as the PC realizes from the building's layout where bedrooms and likely congregation areas can be found.

Finding unconscious townsfolk is more difficult. The Search check DC begins at 20, with the same modifiers and time constraints as described above. Although D&D has specific rules for carrying capacity, it's difficult to imagine a human-sized individual carrying more than one or two creatures of his own size. To simulate this (and to prevent stronger characters from walking out with piles of unconscious townsfolk), assume a character can carry only one creature one size category larger than he is, two creatures of his size category, or four creatures one or more size categories smaller than he is.

EVIL CRYPT

An evil crypt is any location that has been consecrated to the service of evil deities and is now the home of undead. An evil crypt is usually haunted by not only undead, but also by cultists who worship the undead, spellcasters who seek to use undead as tools and minions, or evil outsiders attracted to the fell energies that surround the area.

Those who dwell in crypts generally rely on darkvision to see; evil crypts are rarely, if ever, illuminated. Walking through a partially ruined evil crypt counts as moving through dense rubble. Incorporeal undead are particularly effective in this kind of terrain, since they can simply pass through the rubble and thus gain significant mobility over intruders.

Stone sarcophagi are common features of evil crypts. These coffins stand upright or in repose on their backs, and might be found in niches along the wall or in the middle of a room. A sarcophagus in the middle of a room can provide cover.

The constant presence of undeath, combined with the fell attentions of sinister deities, invests an evil crypt with a continual *unhallow* effect (caster level 20th). This effect can be destroyed by *Mordenkainen's disjunction*, but lesser dispelling magic only suppresses the effect for 1d4 rounds. *Hallow* cast in the area suppresses the effect as well, for as long as the *hallow* effect lasts; if it is dispelled, the *unhallow* effect returns.

The *unhallow* effect infuses the area with the effect of a *magic circle against good*. All creatures in the crypt gain a +2 deflection bonus to their Armor Class against attacks by good creatures, and a +2 resistance bonus on all saving throws against good attacks. No creatures in the area can be possessed, nor can mental control be exercised over any of them. Finally, nonevil summoned creatures cannot use natural weapons against any creatures in the area, and they recoil if an attack requires touching the warded individual. This protection against summoned creatures ends if the protected creature attacks the summoned creature, or tries to force the barrier against the blocked creature. Spell resistance can allow a creature to overcome this protection and touch a warded creature.

EVIL CRYPT SPELL EFFECTS

d%	Result
01–05	*Aid*: All denizens gain a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls and on all saves against fear effects, plus 1d8+10 temporary hit points. Creatures with immunity to mind-affecting spells and abilities do not gain these bonuses.
06–15	*Bane*: All intruders take a –1 penalty on attack rolls and on all saves against fear effects. Creatures with immunity to fear or mind-affecting spells and abilities are unaffected.
16–20	*Bless*: All denizens gain a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls and on all saves against fear effects. Creatures with immunity to fear or mind-affecting spells and abilities are unaffected.
21–30	*Cause Fear*: All intruders must make a DC 11 Will save at the start of their turn each round or become shaken for 1 round. Creatures with 6 or more Hit Dice are immune to this effect, as are creatures that have immunity to fear or mind-affecting spells and abilities.
31–40	*Darkness*: All denizens are shrouded in shadowy light, and gain concealment. Any spell with the light descriptor of 2nd level or higher counters this effect as long as the light spell is in effect.
41–45	*Death Ward*: All denizens have immunity to death spells, magical death effects, energy drain, and negative energy effects.
46–55	*Deeper Darkness*: As *darkness,* above, except that a light spell must be 3rd level or higher to counter the effect.
56–65	*Dispel Magic*: All intruders are subjected to an area dispel on their turn in initiative. The dispel check of this effect is +10; for full details, see page 223 of the *Player's Handbook*.
66–70	*Freedom of Movement*: All denizens can move and attack normally, even under the influence of magic that impedes movement, such as paralysis, solid fog, slow, and web. All denizens automatically succeed on grapple checks made to resist a grapple check, as well as on grapple checks or Escape Artist checks made to escape a grapple or pin. Denizens can also move and attack normally underwater.
71–75	*Invisibility Purge*: All invisible intruders have their invisibility negated.
76–85	*Protection from Energy*: Select one form of energy (acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic). All denizens gain immunity to this energy, absorbing up to 120 points of damage from that energy type per day.
86–90	*Resist Energy*: Select one form of energy (acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic). All denizens gain resistance 30 against that form of energy.
91–100	*Silence*: All intruders must make a DC 13 Will save each round to resist becoming *silenced,* as the spell, for 20 minutes. At the end of this duration, if the intruder is still in the crypt, he must save again to resist the effect.

All turning checks made to turn undead in the *unhallowed* area take a –4 penalty, and turning checks to rebuke undead gain a +4 profane bonus.

Finally, evil crypts with an *unhallow* effect have one additional spell effect tied to the crypt. You can roll d%

to determine the effect, or simply choose an appropriate effect from the following table. The effects target either the denizens of the crypt (who all worship the same evil deity) or all intruders (who worship a different deity). A creature that worships the deity to which the evil crypt is dedicated is treated as a denizen, not as an intruder.

FLOODING DUNGEON

An encounter involcing a flooding dungeon works in a similar fashion to a chase scene. In this case, though, the characters are being pursued by implacably rising water. They have only so much time to escape the dungeon's confines before they become trapped and drown. The possible addition of innocents in need of rescue compounds the danger.

Water

A dungeon being flooded with water isn't a true threat unless the water is moving swiftly. When you use this encounter, then, assume the water is moving fast. If a character in fast-moving water makes a DC 15 Swim check, the force of the water deals 1d3 points of nonlethal damage per round. After a failed check, the character must immediately succeed on another check or slip beneath the water's surface and risk drowning (see below). In a normal fast-moving water environment, the Swim check represents fighting a current; in a flooding dungeon, it represents the rush of water filling a room, and the barrage of debris it pushes before it, slamming into anything in its path. Checks of this difficulty need only be made if the characters are in a room filled more than 4 feet deep. In a room filled with 4 feet of water or less, the DC drops to 10.

Water from an underground source or from a large body of water in a nontropical region is likely to be fairly cold, but not of a temperature to cause characters difficulty as they flee. In exceptionally cold water, characters take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per minute of exposure due to the onset of hypothermia.

Characters might risk drowning in a flooding dungeon. A character who goes under can hold her breath for a number of rounds equal to her Constitution score. After this time, she must make a Constitution check (DC 10, + 1 per previous check) every round to keep holding her breath. When the character fails the Constitution check, she begins to drown. In the first round, she falls unconscious (0 hp); in the second round, she drops to –1 hp and is dying; and in the third round, she drowns.

In areas of deep water, movement becomes difficult. Entering a square with water 1 foot deep requires 2 squares of movement, and the DC of Tumble checks increases by 2. Entering a square with water 4 feet deep requires 4 squares of movement. Small or smaller creatures must swim at this depth (Swim DC 15), and tumbling is impossible.

Rising Water

For simplicity's sake, keep the water rising at a set level throughout the dungeon. A rate of 1 foot per round is fast enough to keep tension high and the PCs moving. A slower rate gives them too much time to escape. You're not looking to kill them, only to keep them aware of the danger. If your group is particularly mobile, consider a faster rate, with water pouring in from multiple sources.

Hazards

This encounter works best in a multilevel dungeon for various reasons. A flat dungeon either floods too quickly (if it floods from every direction) or it's too easy to escape (if it floods from a single direction). But no matter what dungeon you use, you can use a variety of tricks to keep the tension even higher.

Sudden Waves: The PCs enter a room so far untouched by floodwaters. From a door nearby, a wave of water then comes bursting into the room, instantly filling it to a depth of 1 foot and requiring everyone within to make a DC 15 Balance or Strength check or fall prone in the water. The water then continues to rise at the normal rate.

Obstructions: If the flood gets ahead of the PCs for even a round or two, the entire layout of the dungeon can change as the force of the water shifts debris. Consider blocking off the exit, forcing the PCs to clear a path before the waters get too high or to find another way out.

Vary the Flow: Give the characters respite from time to time as the water fills numerous small niches and chambers behind them. This is an especially useful trick right before a sudden wave or right after the characters discover an obstruction blocking their path. Just don't wait too long before the waters start creeping back up.

Swimming to Find the Exit: Introduce submerged chambers or passages that require the characters to swim underwater to find their way out. If they don't know how far they need to swim, so much the better. When the characters plunge into the water to find their way, have them make DC 10 Search or Survival checks to know the right way to go. If the strongest swimmer takes one end of a long rope to mark a safe passage to follow, allow characters using the safety line a +4 bonus on this check.

Waterfalls: A waterfall suddenly gushing from cracks in the ceiling, from an overhang, or from a balcony can be a tremendous shock. If it dumps directly on the characters, they must make DC 15 Balance or Strength checks or fall prone, and the room is immediately filled with 1 foot of water.

Rescue

A dungeon filling with water can be terrifying if the PCs know that slaves, prisoners, or other nonhostile NPCs are relying on the heroes to secure their freedom. Numerous groups of captives in need of rescue further complicate the

scenario. Forcing the PCs to split up adds a whole new level of tension. While rescuing NPCs, the group's speed is reduced to that of the slowest NPC (unless the characters opt to leave someone behind). Assuming a nearly panicked group not in peak physical condition, this probably lowers the entire group's speed to 20 feet.

Unconscious NPCs might need to be carried. Assume a character can carry one creature one size category larger than he is, two creatures of his size category, and four creatures one or more size categories smaller than he is.

Other Options

Your dungeon need not flood with water. Consider flooding it with lava if it's near a volcano or a seismically active region, sand if it's in a desert, or toxic gas anywhere. Lava deals damage as described on page 304 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, sand slows creatures and presents the same drowning risks as water, and toxic gas might act as a poison (dealing ability damage) or be flammable.

ICE BRIDGE

An ice bridge is a good example of a hazardous location, since it connects two relatively close but otherwise inaccessible locations, whether it's the opposite shores of a partially frozen river, the walls of facing cliffs, or the tops of two frozen structures. The ice bridge depicted in the illustration is a span that bridges a crevasse in the high mountains. Locations such as these make great settings for encounters, since adventurers can be funneled toward them with relative ease. Even PCs with good Jump modifiers or the ability to fly might be forced to seek out a bridge to cross a chasm, especially if the wind is strong or they are traveling with companions who can't fly and are too heavy to carry.

Crossing the Bridge

An ice bridge is a slippery surface. Anyone walking on it must make a DC 10 Balance check to move at half speed along the surface for 1 round. A failure by 4 or less indicates the character can't move for 1 round. A failure by 5 or more means he falls prone. He can try to walk at his full speed with a –5 penalty on the check. If he is attacked while trying to balance, he is considered flat-footed unless he has at least 5 ranks in Balance. If he takes damage while balancing, he must make another Balance check against the same DC to remain standing.

The Balance check becomes much more dangerous near the edges of an ice bridge. If a character moves through a square that overlaps the edge of the bridge (no matter how much of the square remains ice bridge and how little remains open air), he must instead make a DC 22 Balance check.

If the character falls prone, he might slide across the icy surface. The chance for sliding and the direction he slides depends on

Illus. by E. Cox

An ice bridge beckons adventurers to a swift death

the situation that made him fall. Simply falling while trying to move brings a 25% chance of a 5-foot slide in the direction he was moving. This assumes he has moved 15 feet or less when he falls; he slides an additional 5 feet if he has traveled more than 15 feet in the current round. Sliding can provoke attacks of opportunity if the character slides through a threatened square.

Falling as a result of being attacked brings a 50% chance of a slide directly away from the direction of the attack. The character slides for 5 feet in this case.

If a character slides while on a square occupied by the bridge's edge, or if he slides into such a square, he immediately falls off the edge of the bridge and takes falling damage; the crevasse in this case is 50 feet deep, so falls into it cause 5d6 points of damage. In addition, the bed of the crevasse is littered with jagged shards of ice. A falling character is attacked by 1d4+1 of these shards. Each shard has a +10 attack bonus and deals 1d4+5 points of damage on a hit.

Destroying an Ice Bridge

An ice bridge is fairly solid, but not so solid that it can't be destroyed. The bridge maintains a fairly consistent thickness of 15 feet, but each 5-foot square that is destroyed brings a cumulative 20% chance that the entire bridge shatters. The bridge also shatters if a creature makes a successful Strength check to break it; the break DC decreases by 10 for each 5-foot section of bridge destroyed.

The bridge can support up to four Medium creatures or one Large creature at a time. If more than that number of creatures occupy the bridge at one time, the bridge breaks.

Area spells can damage the bridge as well. Since the bridge is a nonmagical unattended object, it automatically fails any saving throw against a magical effect. Fire energy bypasses the bridge's hardness and deals 150% normal damage. Cold damage does not affect the bridge. Acid deals one-quarter normal damage, electricity and sonic effects each deal full damage, and sonic damage (like fire damage) bypasses the bridge's hardness.

Creatures on the bridge when it breaks fall into the chasm (see above) and are also buried by the ice bridge's rubble as if by an avalanche (see page 90 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Ice Bridge: Hardness 10; hp 180 per 5-foot section; break DC 75, minus 10 per 5-foot section destroyed.

LAVA

Lava-filled areas are one of the most inhospitable terrains known. Nevertheless, several iconic D&D monsters (such as red dragons, fire elementals, and fire giants and their salamander and thoqqua minions) have immunity to fire and can be encountered living near, or even in, large rivers and lakes of molten rock. Lava, while horrendously hot, isn't hot enough to melt rock or metals. Exposed lava cools fairly quickly. Within 5 minutes, a Medium creature can walk upon the surface of hardened lava, but the surface remains hot and can still cause damage (see Contact with Lava, below), since the interior remains molten. In particularly large lava flows, the interior can remain molten for years.

Proximity Dangers

Lava is blisteringly hot, and the nearby air temperature in areas of lava can be dangerous.

Horizontal Proximity: A character who approaches within 30 feet of a substantial (at least 10-foot square) source of lava is exposed to hot conditions (above 90° F) and must make a Fortitude saving throw each hour (DC 15, + 1 per previous check) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. Characters wearing heavy clothing or armor of any sort take a –4 penalty on their saves. Characters reduced to unconsciousness begin taking lethal damage (1d4 points in each 1-hour period).

Vertical Proximity: A character who passes over the surface of lava without contacting it is still exposed to superheated air. Within 31 to 100 feet, the air temperature is hot (see Horizontal Proximity, above).

At 30 feet or closer, the air temperature above exposed lava is severe heat (above 110° F). A character must make a Fortitude save once every 10 minutes (DC 15, + 1 per previous check) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. Characters wearing heavy clothing or armor of any sort take a –4 penalty on their saves. Characters reduced to unconsciousness begin taking lethal damage (1d4 points per each 10-minute period) unless they fall into the lava, at which point things get much worse.

Poison Gas: Lava is sometimes associated with pockets of poisonous vapors or gas. Generally, a large area of lava has a 10% chance of venting poisonous gases. In these situations, anytime a character is close enough to a source of lava to have to make Fortitude saves, he must also make a DC 15 Fortitude save once per round to avoid taking 1 point of Strength damage. All such characters must make a second save 1 minute later or take another 1 point of Strength damage.

Contact with Lava

Molten lava deals 2d6 points of fire damage per round of exposure, except in the case of total immersion, which deals 20d6 points of fire damage per round.

Damage from molten lava continues for 1d3 rounds after exposure ceases, but this additional damage is only half that dealt during actual contact.

Lava cools after about 5 minutes, and its surface becomes hard enough to walk on, but it remains dangerously hot for 4d6 hours. A creature takes 1d6 points of fire damage if it touches partially cooled lava, except in the case of continual contact (such as when a creature walks along the surface of cooling lava), which deals 2d6 points of fire damage per round.

Until lava cools completely, there's also the chance of stepping on a particularly thin crust and plunging through into the molten lava below. Each round a creature walks or stands on partially cooled lava, there's a 5% chance of breaking through. In this case, the creature takes 2d6 points of fire damage (Reflex DC 15 negates) from the molten rock. Withdrawing a limb from a sudden crack like this can be tough, since the edges of the crack quickly cool and make extraction difficult. Pulling free of this situation requires a DC 15 Escape Artist check. Once the limb is removed, the creature continues to take 1d6 points of fire damage for 1d3 rounds as the lava cools.

Moving in Lava

Molten lava is a liquid, but it is far more viscous than water. As a result, it is difficult to swim through lava. Creatures might be able to do so, but their swim speeds are halved, and the DCs required to swim in lava are twice those in normal water.

Lava	Swim DC
Calm	20
Flowing	30
Erupting	40

Characters wielding bludgeoning and piercing weapons while immersed in lava take a –4 penalty on attack rolls and deal only half damage on a successful hit.

A character under the effect of *freedom of movement* can swim through lava is if it were water, and can fight without penalties.

The best method of moving through lava is with a burrow speed. A creature can move through lava at its full burrow speed, and it takes no penalties on attacks with weapons.

Lava and Water

Lava cools quickly when it comes in contact with water, but as it does, it causes water within 30 feet to boil. Boiling water deals 1d6 points of fire damage, unless a character is

Illus. by M. Phillippi

Krusk avoids being pulled into the lava while he takes a swing at a salamander

fully immersed, in which case it deals 10d6 points of fire damage per round of exposure.

In relatively shallow bodies of water (less than 300 feet) where there is more water than lava, exposed lava explodes with shocking force into a blast of volcanic glass. Any creature within 30 feet of such an explosion takes 3d6 points of fire damage and 3d6 points of slashing damage (Reflex DC 20 half). A violent explosion like this depletes the majority of the lava and typically seals any volcanic vents; if more magma remains below, it takes 4d6 hours for it to build up enough pressure to seep back into the water.

In deep underwater areas (such as undersea volcanic trenches), water pressure is so great that it prevents boiling and violent explosions, even when in contact with water. This water is still heated by the contact with lava, though, and creatures immersed in it take 4d6 points of fire damage per round of exposure.

RESTRICTIVE TUNNELS

Classic villains for lower-level characters include goblins, kobolds, and derro. These notorious races, despite their wildly different physical appearances and abilities, have one thing in common: their size. As Small creatures, they gain a bonus to their Armor Class and on attack rolls, but the advantages of being small needn't stop there. Out in the open, large groups of organized goblins, kobolds, or derro can be a menace, but in their lairs they can be outright deadly simply because the size of a comfortable home for them is a major inconvenience for most of their enemies.

Low ceiling tunnels don't just come into play when fighting goblinoids. Natural caverns often constrict down to narrow passageways and low ceilings; these areas make natural haunts for smaller creatures such as chokers and darkmantles. The reverse is also true. A group of Medium PCs can gain substantial advantages by luring a dragon or a giant into narrow confines.

Restrictive tunnels can impede movement in two ways; they can have low ceilings, forcing tall creatures to crouch or even crawl. They can also have narrow widths, forcing larger creatures to squeeze through tight openings.

Movement in Cramped Spaces

Any creature fighting in a cramped space loses its Dexterity bonus (if any) to Armor Class. Beyond that, the following adjustments apply, depending upon the prevailing conditions.

Narrow or Low: An area that is smaller horizontally than a creature's space or smaller vertically than a creature's height falls into this category, so long as the constricted dimension is at least one-half the creature's space or height, respectively. A creature in such a space moves at half its normal speed because of the cramped conditions, and running and charging are impossible. The cramped creature takes a –2 circumstance penalty on attack rolls with light weapons and a –4 circumstance penalty on attack rolls with one-handed weapons. It cannot use two-handed weapons at all.

Narrow and Low: An area that is smaller in both the horizontal and vertical dimensions than the creature's space falls into this category, so long as each of the constricted dimensions is at least one-half the creature's space or height, respectively. A creature in these conditions moves at one-quarter normal speed and takes attack penalties equal to twice those indicated above.

Crawl-Navigable: An area less than one-half but at least one-quarter of the creature's height is crawl-navigable. The creature can move through each space by falling prone and crawling at a speed of 5 feet (1 square), but it must remove medium and heavy armor, backpacks, and other bulky equipment (although they can be dragged along behind). The normal penalties for being prone apply. The only ranged weapon a creature in a crawl-navigable space can use is a crossbow.

Awkward Space: An awkward space is narrower than narrow, lower than low, or smaller than crawl-navigable, but not quite a tight space. A creature in such a space can move 5 feet (1 square) with a DC 15 Escape Artist check. Fighting in an awkward space is possible only with light weapons, and the creature takes a –8 circumstance penalty on its attack rolls. The only ranged weapon a creature in an awkward space can use is a crossbow.

Tight Squeeze: A tight squeeze is an area larger than the creature's head but smaller than its shoulders, as described in the Escape Artist skill description. The creature can move 5 feet (1 square) with a DC 30 Escape Artist check. Fighting in a tight squeeze is impossible.

Tunnel Constriction

Constriction	Move Penalty[1]	Attack Penalty Light Weapon[2]	Attack Penalty 1-Handed Weapon[2]	Attack Penalty 2-Handed Weapon[2]	Ranged Weapon
Narrow or low	1/2 speed	–2	–4	Unusable	Any
Narrow and low	1/4 speed	–4	–8	Unusable	Any
Crawl-navigable	5 ft. only	–4	–8	Unusable	Crossbow only
Awkward space	Escape Artist (DC 15) 5 ft.	–8	Unusable	Unusable	Crossbow only
Tight squeeze	Escape Artist (DC 30) 5 ft.	Unusable	Unusable	Unusable	Unusable

1 A creature moving through cramped quarters of any constriction loses its Dexterity bonus (if any) to Armor Class.
2 Treat piercing weapons that are jabbed at the target as one size category smaller.

Weapons in Cramped Spaces

Some weapons are more suitable for use in limited space than others. Piercing weapons that jab rather than slice at an opponent are treated as one size category smaller than normal for the purpose of calculating the wielder's penalty on attack rolls. Such weapons include the dagger, short sword, rapier, spear (any type), and trident, but not the pick, scythe, gnome hooked hammer, or spiked chain.

Attacks with ranged weapons take penalties appropriate to the weapons' sizes in narrow or low conditions. Crossbows are the only ranged weapons usable in crawl-navigable and awkward spaces, but attacks made with them still take size-appropriate penalties.

Other Movement Modes

The rules for moving in cramped spaces above assume a creature using a land speed. Other movement modes are handled somewhat differently.

Burrowing: A creature that uses a burrow speed takes no penalties to movement or on attack rolls with light weapons in cramped spaces. Remember that a burrow speed allows movement through solid rock and stone only if the creature's description indicates such; otherwise, a creature can only burrow through loose earth.

Climbing: Climb speeds have no use in areas with low ceilings, but in narrow vertical spaces they are treated as if the creature were using a land speed. A Climb DC has a –10 penalty if the climber is in a cramped space.

Flying: A winged creature can use its fly speed without modification in low areas. A creature that flies without wings (using magic) can also use its fly speed in crawl-navigable areas. Fly speeds cannot be used in other cramped areas.

Swimming: In narrow or low flooded areas, a creature can swim at its full swim speed in low or crawl-navigable areas, and at half its swim speed in narrow or narrow and low areas.

TREETOP VILLAGE

Forested regions are popular places to set adventures. They're common in fantasy settings, and popular races such as elves and gnomes inhabit wooded areas. A treetop village provides an interesting and fun location to have a dangerous encounter. Fans of fantasy have read about such places or seen them depicted in movies. The swashbuckling action of swinging on vines and ropes, combined with precarious skirmishes on rope bridges or on twisting stairs and walkways. makes for memorable action sequences.

Buildings in the Branches

The structures common to a treetop village are the same as in any village. Visitors will see shops, restaurants, and other businesses, as well as private residences. Buildings are usually built 50 to 100 feet above the ground, depending on the type of trees and the individual preferences of the community's members. Buildings within a given community usually don't differ more than 20 feet in elevation.

Roads in the Sky

Buildings in villages on the ground are connected by roads, whether of cobblestones or earth. In a treetop village, roads take different forms. On and around individual trees, wooden staircases spiral up the trees' trunks to wooden platforms built among the branches. Some communities favor strict safety measures, but most villages use simple handrails. Accustomed to the dangers of treetop living, the citizens don't think twice about ascending the narrow stairs or walking near the edges of the wooden platforms near their homes. The game statistics of the stairs, platforms, and guardrails can be found in the table below.

Usually, stairs and platforms are constructed, but magical cultures can shape these structures from living wood. Elves are particularly fond of this building method. Shaped platforms or stairs have double the hit points and weight capacity of their constructed counterparts. Exceeding its weight capacity causes a stair or platform to break in 1d4 rounds, sending anything or anyone in that space plummeting to the ground below.

To connect trees to one another, treetop communities typically use a series of bridges. For gaps of 10 feet or less, wooden bridges suffice. For greater distances, the denizens construct rope bridges consisting of a single foot rope and two hand ropes. Stringers connect the three ropes periodically to keep swaying to a minimum. These rope bridges can be a great source of action if battle erupts in a treetop community.

Treetop Roads

Type	Hardness	Hit Points	Break DC	Weight Capacity	Balance DC[2]
Stairs	5	20*	23	500 lb.[1]	10
Platforms, bridges	5	20*	23	500 lb.[1]	8
Guardrails	5	10	18	150 lb.	20
Rope (bridge or swinging)	0	8	23	400 lb.	12[3]

1 Magically shaped wooden structures have twice the hit points and weight capacity of constructed structures.
2 Balance DCs apply only in combat or if the DM feels them necessary. For foot traffic on stable structures in reasonable weather, Balance checks are not required.
3 The Balance DC increases to 20 if balancing on a single rope.

Combat: Bridges, Platforms, and Stairs

Battle on the bridges, platforms, and stairs of a treetop community can be an exhilarating—and lethal—encounter. Fighting while adjacent to the edge of stairs, platforms, or wooden bridges requires a DC 5 Balance check each round. The danger is not extremely high due to the presence of guardrails. In the absence of guardrails, the DC rises to 8. Creatures gain a +1 bonus on melee attack rolls if fighting above their opponents on stairs.

Fighting on a rope bridge is a different matter. Swinging a weapon while on one of these precarious bridges is difficult. Attacks with slashing and bludgeoning weapons have a –2 penalty on damage rolls. Since the ground is effectively mobile, such blows lack their usual power. In addition, different attack types are made at a penalty, depending on whether or not a creature has a hand free to grasp one of the two guide ropes. Finally, a combatant on a rope bridge must make a Balance check each round or slip off the bridge. A falling creature can attempt a DC 15 Reflex save to arrest his flight and grab the ropes of the bridge, but even if successful, the falling creature is likely at the mercy of his opponent.

The ropes of a rope bridge can be cut. For each cut guardrail rope, the DC of Balance checks made on the bridge increases by 5. If the bottom walking rope is cut, combatants fall unless they succeed on a DC 15 Reflex save to grab one of the remaining ropes.

Rope Bridge Combat

Attack Type	Attack Penalty	Balance DC
One-handed melee (off hand free)	–2	10
Two-handed melee[1]	–4	15
One-handed ranged	–2	10
Two-handed ranged	–2	10

1 For this purpose, this category includes characters wielding a weapon and carrying a heavy shield or another piece of equipment.

Swinging on Ropes and Vines

Swinging on a rope is a staple of the swashbuckling genre, and a visit to a treetop village is likely to provoke the question of how to perform this daring feat. Executing a successful swing is fairly easy. Making it look good is another matter entirely.

To perform a swing on a vine or rope, a character must make a DC 5 Strength check. The DC is 10 if the character is carrying a medium load, and 15 if the character is carrying a heavy load. If the character wants to swing using only one hand, he takes a –2 penalty on the check. A character can also release a rope at the end of a swing if his trajectory carries him to a height over his destination. The character can make DC 15 Jump and Tumble checks to reduce falling damage from a planned release, just as if he were jumping from any height to a lower elevation.

A character can swing from one point to another with just this simple check if his destination is at the same elevation as where he begins the swing. A character can gain as much as 20 feet of elevation with a swing, provided he covers enough horizontal distance. For every 5 feet to be gained in elevation, a character must swing at least 20 feet horizontally. For example, if a character wants to swing from a platform 60 feet above the ground to a platform 70 feet above the ground, the platforms must be at least 40 feet apart.

A character can't reach a height more than 20 feet above his starting point unless he climbs the rope on which he's swinging en route. Swinging on a rope has a flat speed of 40 feet, so generally, a swinging character can gain additional elevation equal to one-quarter his speed as part of the swinging action. A character can make two Climb checks to gain elevation in this fashion if the swing is long enough to constitute a double move (a gap of greater than 40 feet). The Climb check DC to ascend a swinging rope is 20, which is more difficult than for a stationary, unknotted rope (DC 15). If the swinging rope is knotted, the Climb DC drops to 15.

Combat: Swinging

A character can make a single attack at the end of a swing, provided his swing for the round is less than 80 feet (a double move on a swinging rope) and the attack is made with a weapon he can wield in one hand. He gains the benefits of a charge (+2 on the attack roll and –2 to AC) on the attack, and he might gain the benefit of higher ground (+1 on the attack roll). Making a ranged attack while swinging is possible only with a ranged weapon the character can wield in one hand. Making an attack at the end of the swing requires a character to take a –2 penalty on the Strength check for the swing, since he's swinging with one hand (see above), unless he has the Quick Draw feat, a *glove of storing*, or another ability that allows him to draw a weapon as a free action. In this case, the character can swing using both hands and draw his weapon a split-second before making his attack.

SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS

Other creatures provide as much opportunity for unique encounters as locations. Interactions with large groups, particularly in heavily populated areas, create their own hazards.

THE CHASE

A dramatic chase has become a classic staple of the action and fantasy genres. They give fast characters a chance to show off, and provide uncertainty and tension as players scramble to pursue an important villain.

Chases can be resolved fairly easily while still maintaining a high level of drama. The first thing to consider is speed. If the pursuer and her quarry have the same speed, the pursuing character needs to gain speed advantages in the course of the pursuit to catch her opponent. The one being chased, meanwhile, has the opportunity to introduce obstacles to slow down his pursuer.

If the characters have different speeds, the matter is more easily settled. Each round, compare the speeds of the two involved in the chase. If the difference in speed is in favor of the pursuer, she closes the gap between the two by that

difference each round. If the speed difference is in favor of the fleeing character, the gap widens by that amount. Most chases don't allow the participants to use the run action (×4 speed), and consist only of double move actions.

Pits and Gaps

In a chase, pits and gaps can be excellent obstacles. Speed being equal, the character with the better Jump check modifier is likely to have an advantage during a chase that involves leaping over a gap. A character who fails by less than 5 on a Jump check to clear a gap can attempt a DC 15 Reflex save to grab the lip on the far edge. Pulling up from such an edge requires a move action and a DC 15 Climb check.

Debris

In a given round during a chase, there's a 10% chance that the terrain contains debris a creature being chased can scatter to slow down his pursuer. In urban environments, the chance increases to 30%. The chased character can make a DC 10 Strength check as a free action to tip debris over behind him as he runs. Success on this check scatters debris over a 10-foot-square area in the path of the pursuer, making the area the equivalent of dense rubble. Difficult terrain requires a character to spend 2 squares of movement (per square) to enter. Failure means the chased character not only fails to knock the debris over but spends a move action trying to push the pile over and then recovering.

If you wish, you could provide a chased character with larger piles of debris to spill. For each additional 10-foot-square section the character tries to turn into difficult terrain, the DC of the Strength check increases by 5. The character doesn't need to try to tip over the entire pile of debris, and can choose to knock over as much or little as he likes. Failure on these higher DC checks has the same result.

Some kinds of debris might not need to be toppled over. Perhaps oil or another slippery surface covers an area through which the chase proceeds. Maybe the creature being chased runs into a crowd or through a building. Different situations might call for different adjustments or skill checks. As a general rule, if debris is of the sort that impedes a character's progress, it can be treated as dense rubble. Even a crowd could be treated as rubble if keeping a scene moving is more important than dealing with a crowd's reaction to being pushed around. If debris is of the sort that causes unsure footing, use a Balance check.

Incline

Running up inclines should be common in chases. Whether the characters involved sprint up peaked roofs, up stairs to higher elevations, or up a hill, an incline can make for an interesting chase element.

As described under Hills Terrain, page 89 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, gradual slopes have no effect on movement. Steep slopes, however, require characters to spend 2 squares of movement to enter each square of steep slope. A slope covered with debris is even more difficult to deal with; characters entering a debris-filled square on a slope must spend 3 squares of movement.

Types of Chases

When planning a chase scene, consider setting it where you can add unique terrain elements to make the event memorable. A chase through a cramped sewer, where PCs need to squeeze to pursue their prey, is a perfect example. Moving into a narrow space takes 2 squares of movement, and creatures can squeeze into an area half as wide as they are. Combine that with a foot (or more) of water and the occasional passage with a low ceiling, and you have a dank, miserable chase your characters won't forget.

Likewise, consider a chase across a series of mountain glaciers. Chasms open up beneath the characters and their prey's (or pursuers') feet on occasion, requiring Jump checks or DC 15 Reflex saves to avoid dropping hundreds of feet into an icy gap. The terrain is also slick with ice in places, requiring DC 10 or higher Balance checks from involved parties to keep their footing.

Consider the following situations or environments in which you can run your own chase scene:

- Across a rooftop or series of rooftops
- Through a crowded marketplace
- Through a series of forest paths
- Across a series of sand dunes
- Through a labyrinth of urban alleyways

CROWDS

Crowds of people most often occur in large cities, but the rules presented here can just as easily work for caverns teeming with hundreds of goblins, stampeding animals, or even tangled forests of sentient, writhing plantlife.

Crowds are usually not antagonistic toward the PCs, but their presence can severely limit movement and adds a new factor to the use of area spells. It isn't necessary to put every member of a crowd on the map when a fight breaks out or when the PCs are forced to chase an enemy through the area. Instead, just indicate which squares on the map contain crowds. If a crowd sees something obviously dangerous, it will move away at 30 feet per round on initiative count 0. For detailed rules on handling crowds as an entity, refer below to Mobs.

Directing a Crowd: It takes a DC 15 Diplomacy check or DC 20 Intimidate check to convince a crowd to move in a particular direction, and the crowd must be able to hear or see the character making the attempt. It takes a full-round action to make the Diplomacy check, but a free action to make the Intimidate check.

If two or more characters are trying to direct a crowd in different directions, they make opposed Diplomacy or Intimidate checks to determine whom the crowd listens to. The crowd ignores everyone if none of the characters' check results beat the DCs given above.

Movement in a Crowd

People in crowds are packed together tightly, sometimes shoulder to shoulder. As a general rule, a single 5-foot square occupied by a crowd of Medium creatures contains three Medium creatures. These cramped conditions make moving in a crowd difficult. It takes 2 squares of movement to move through a square occupied by a crowd. The crowd provides cover for anyone who does so, enabling a Hide check and providing a bonus to Armor Class and on Reflex saves.

A character who ends his movement in a stationary crowd square finds it difficult to do anything but move with the crowd. He takes a –2 penalty on attack rolls, Reflex saving throws, and all skill checks that are affected by armor check penalties, and he loses his Dexterity bonus to Armor Class. Being in a stationary crowd square counts as vigorous motion for the purposes of spellcasting (requiring a DC 10 Concentration check).

A character who ends his movement in a crowd square that moved in the last round faces an additional danger. He can take a full-round action to stand his ground, he can take a full-round action to move with the crowd, or he can try to resist the crowd's motion. A character who tries to resist a crowd in this manner must make a DC 15 Reflex save. Success indicates that he takes the same penalties as for being in a stationary crowd, except that the action constitutes violent motion (requiring a DC 15 Concentration check to cast spells). Failure indicates that the PC loses all actions for the round and is subjected to a trip attack. The crowd has a +8 bonus on the opposed attack roll to resolve the trip attack. If the character is knocked prone, he is trampled for 2d6 points of damage.

Traffic Flow

Traffic is a specific form of crowd that appears on roadways and open areas. Any crowd that moves at least its speed in a round is considered to be in traffic for the remainder of the round.

Although roads are built to ease traffic, they can still become rather crowded and difficult to navigate. In settlements, these conditions can cause significant problems to characters, especially when combat or a chase breaks out. Traffic can be categorized into four distinct categories.

Sporadic: Sporadic traffic covers the range of traffic from lightly crowded down to empty roads. Movement is not impeded by sporadic traffic, and no Reflex save is necessary when moving against the flow of traffic (since for the most part, there's no appreciable traffic to flow in the first place).

Lightly Crowded: Large gaps and open areas typify traffic at this level. Moving through a lightly crowded roadway does not provide cover, nor does it impede movement. Moving against the flow of traffic can still be dangerous, but the Reflex save to avoid being knocked prone is DC 12. If a character takes a move action to avoid oncoming traffic, he gains a +4 bonus on his Reflex save. The effects and damage of failing this saving throw are the same as for heavily crowded traffic.

Heavily Crowded: Heavily crowded roads contain crowds, but these crowds only impede movement if a character is moving against or across the flow of traffic. A heavily crowded road presents an additional danger—the chance of being knocked over and crushed by the press of traffic. A character who moves against the flow of traffic must make a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid being knocked prone by the traffic. If the character takes a move action to avoid oncoming traffic, he gains a +4 bonus on this Reflex saving throw. A character who is knocked prone takes 2d6 points of bludgeoning damage from being trampled and crushed in the round he is knocked prone and in each additional round he remains prone. In most cases, traffic becomes jammed 1d4 rounds after a character begins taking damage.

Jammed: Jammed traffic occurs only when an obstruction prevents passage along a roadway. A dense, standing crowd of people, horses, carts, and wagons can be very difficult to move through. A jammed road consists of stationary crowds.

MOBS

An angry mob represents the most dangerous form of crowd. An angry mob might or might not be enraged at the PCs, but as a general rule the mob mentality overrides the desires and goals of an individual in a mob, and PCs who happen to get in the way could find themselves the focus of the mob's rage.

A mob is treated as a single entity similar to a swarm, except that it is made of larger creatures. A mob can be composed of Small, Medium, or Large creatures, but all the individual creatures must be of the same type. A mob that incorporates a crowd of goblins and a crowd of chokers is best modeled by two separate mobs. You can use the following template to create specific types of mobs.

"Mob" is an acquired template that can be added to any Small, Medium, or Large creature. Generally, mobs are transitory; after forming, a mob lasts for, at most, 1d4+1 hours before breaking up. Most mobs break up naturally far sooner, once the condition that caused their formation is no longer a factor. A mob uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: A mob is a Gargantuan creature composed of either forty-eight Small or Medium creatures or twelve Large creatures. The mob's type remains unchanged from the base creature.

Hit Dice: A mob has a single pool of Hit Dice and hit points. All mobs have 30 Hit Dice; this number represents the mob's mentality and physical mass rather than its race or class, since the individual members of a mob don't use their own abilities or experience to aid the whole. The type of Hit Dice rolled is set by the mob's racial Hit Dice, not any class levels the mob might have. Thus, a mob of commoners would roll d8s for hit points, not d4s.

Reducing a mob to 0 hit points or lower causes it to break up, though damage taken until that point does not degrade its ability to attack or resist attack. Mobs are never staggered or reduced to a dying state by damage.

Initiative: A mob's initiative modifier is always +0.

Speed: A mob's speed is 10 feet slower than that of the base creature.

Armor Class: As the base creature, modified by –4 for the mob's Gargantuan size.

Base Attack: Since all mobs have 30 Hit Dice, their base attack bonuses are set depending upon their type.

Mob Type	Base Attack Bonus
Fey or undead	+15
Aberration, animal, construct, elemental, giant, humanoid, ooze, plant, or vermin	+22
Dragon, magical beast, monstrous humanoid, or outsider	+30

Grapple: As base attack bonus, modified by +12 for its size, and as appropriate for its Strength modifier.

Attack/Full Attack: Mobs don't make standard attacks. Rather, they are treated similar to swarms in combat. A mob deals 5d6 points of bludgeoning damage to any creature whose space it occupies at the end of its move, with no attack roll needed. Mob attacks ignore concealment and cover. A mob's attacks are nonmagical, unless the base creature's attacks are considered magical. Damage reduction applies to mob attacks.

Space/Reach: A mob occupies a square 20 feet on a side, but its reach is 0 feet. In order to attack, it moves into an opponent's space, which provokes an attack of opportunity. It can occupy the same space as a creature, since it tramples over and moves around its victim. A mob can move through squares occupied by enemies, and vice versa, without impediment, although a mob provokes an attack of opportunity if it does so. A mob can move through openings large enough for its component creatures.

Larger mobs are represented by multiples of single mobs. The area occupied by larger mobs is completely shapeable, though the mob usually remains in contiguous squares.

Attack Options: A mob's mentality is fueled by emotion; as a result, the individual creatures that make up the mob are unable to use any attack options that require actions, such as breath weapons, spell-like abilities, and the like. If the base creature has attack options that affect the damage it deals (such as poison, energy drain, ability damage, improved grab, constrict, rend, or swallow whole), those special attacks function normally on any creature damaged by the mob. Attack options such as gaze weapons that function constantly continue to function normally. The save DCs for any of these attacks should be recalculated based on the mob's 30 Hit Dice.

In addition, mobs gain one or both of the following attack options.

Expert Grappler (Ex): A mob can maintain a grapple without penalty and still make attacks against other targets (normally, attacking other targets while grappling imposes a –20 penalty on grapple checks). A mob is never considered flat-footed while grappling.

Trample (Ex): A mob that simply moves over a creature and doesn't end its movement with that creature in one of its occupied squares can trample the creature. A trampled creature takes damage equal to 2d6 points + 1-1/2 times the mob's Strength modifier. The victim can either make an attack of opportunity against the mob or make a Reflex save (DC 25 + the mob's Str modifier) to take half damage.

Special Qualities: A mob retains all the special qualities of the base creature. In addition, it gains the following special quality.

Mob Anatomy (Ex): A mob has no clear front or back and no discernible anatomy, so it is not subject to critical hits or sneak attacks. A mob cannot be flanked, tripped, grappled, or bull rushed.

Unlike standard swarms, mobs are made up of relatively small numbers of individual creatures, so spells or effects that target specific numbers of creatures can have an effect on a mob. Each specific creature that is slain, disabled, or otherwise incapacitated by spells or effects that target specific creatures bestows two negative levels on the mob. A mob that gains negative levels equal to its Hit Dice breaks up as if reduced to 0 hit points. Negative levels gained in this manner are not the result of negative energy (and thus cannot be blocked by *death ward* or removed by *restoration*), but never result in permanent level loss. A mob takes half again as much damage (+50%) from spells or effects that affect an area, such as splash weapons and evocation spells.

Although mobs are treated as one creature, it sometimes becomes necessary to determine the fate of a specific individual caught up in the mob. If a mob is dispersed by nonlethal attacks, there are no casualties. If the mob is dispersed by lethal attacks, assume that 30% of its number are slain and 30% are reduced to 0 hit points. To determine a specific individual's fate, simply roll d%: a result of 01–30 indicates death, 31–60 indicates the victim is reduced to 0 hit points, and a roll of 61–100 indicates the victim escapes relatively unscathed.

Saves: A mob's saving throws are calculated as for a 30 HD creature of its type. A mob's base good save is +17, and its base bad save is +9.

Abilities: A mob's abilities are the same as the base creature, except that its Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores drop to 10. If the base creature's Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma scores are already lower than 10, they do not change.

Skills: Same as the base creature; do not recalculate based on the mob's 30 Hit Dice. The mob's new Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma scores might grant some skills different modifiers.

Feats: Same as the base creature; all mobs gain Improved Bull Rush and Improved Overrun as bonus feats.

Organization: Solitary, pair, or gang (3–12 mobs).

Challenge Rating: 8, or +2 if the base creature's CR is 7 or higher.

Advancement: —.

Level Adjustment: —.

Sample Mobs

The following statistics blocks, presented in a new format, describe two common forms of mobs, the riot and the stampede. For details of the new format, see page 173.

Riot (Mob of Humans) **CR 8**

LN Gargantuan humanoid (mob of Medium humans)
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages Common

AC 6, touch 6, flat-footed 6
hp 135 (30 HD)
Fort +11, **Ref** +9, **Will** +17

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mob (5d6)
Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Base Atk +22; **Grp** +34
Atk Options expert grappler, trample 2d6

Abilities Str 11, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10
SQ mob anatomy
Feats Improved Initiative, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush[B], Improved Overrun[B]
Skills Listen +4, Spot +4

Stampede (Mob of Light Horses) **CR 8**

N Gargantuan animal (mob of Large animals)
Init +0; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +3, Spot +3

AC 10, touch 7, flat-footed 9
hp 195 (30 HD)
Fort +19, **Ref** +18, **Will** +9

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)
Melee mob (5d6)
Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Base Atk +22; **Grp** +36
Atk Options expert grappler, trample 2d6+3

Abilities Str 14, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 6
SQ mob anatomy
Feats Endurance, Improved Bull Rush[B], Improved Overrun[B], Run
Skills Listen +3, Spot +3

MINIATURES AND ENCOUNTER BUILDING

When building encounters, DMs use a variety of methods to select the particular NPC types and monsters they use. With the advent of the *D&D Miniatures* skirmish game, however, you have a new method for creating unique encounters. The principles involved in creating a competitive, viable warband can apply to creating interesting D&D roleplaying encounters.

WARBANDS AS ROLEPLAYING ENCOUNTERS

You begin the process of warband creation for the skirmish game by selecting a faction. The skirmish game has four factions, each based on an alignment: lawful good, lawful evil, chaotic good, and chaotic evil. Each faction also represents a unique style of play. For example, lawful factions tend to be slow and deal less damage than chaotic factions, but they have higher AC and attack values. These basic principles of factions and warband construction can lead to the generation of interesting roleplaying encounters.

Take a warband you have constructed for use in the skirmish game. At your next D&D session, use the roleplaying statistics on the back of the miniatures stat cards and introduce a roleplaying encounter with your skirmish warband. The warband might seem like a disparate group of normally unassociated creatures, but that's part of the fun. Even if the group is composed of monsters your characters have faced before, this encounter still has a unique flavor. By placing the monsters in a new setting, with different allies from those the characters would normally expect, it's as though they're facing a brand-new monster.

You'll find that the abilities that complement each other so well in the skirmish game do so just as well in the D&D roleplaying game. Skirmish warband design focuses on combining miniatures with abilities that cover for each other's weaknesses. These well-rounded warbands attempt to prepare for any eventuality, whether they might face a fast, hard-hitting warband or a high-AC juggernaut. Groups based around spellcasters or ranged attackers have beefy bodyguards to keep them out of melee. Groups based around a couple of tough, fierce melee combatants have spellcasting backup capable of enhancing their effectiveness in combat. No matter what challenge the characters throw at the group, these groups should have an answer. The skirmish-based group might not have a potent offense in any one category to throw back at the PCs, but its versatility should keep the characters on their toes.

Different warbands focus on perfecting one particular tactic, using it at the expense of all others. These warbands might consist of hard-hitting creatures that deal tremendous amounts of damage but have relatively few defenses themselves, or they might be nearly indestructible

creatures that deal very little damage. This type of focus also translates well into the D&D roleplaying experience. When the characters encounter a one-dimensional group, they'll need to develop a strategy that takes advantage of its weaknesses. When that moment of discovery comes, the characters will feel gratified at their tactical superiority, and you can take satisfaction in knowing you have provided your players with a new type of play experience.

In general, applying the same strategies you use when constructing skirmish warbands to roleplaying encounters makes for a great change of pace. The groups of unique, mixed opponents keep the PCs guessing, always trying to figure out the next tactic they need to adopt to overcome your next band of villains.

ALIGNMENT-BASED ENCOUNTERS

Even if you don't directly bring a skirmish warband into your roleplaying game, you can still use warband-building principles when putting together roleplaying encounters. The generation of warbands based on alignments results in effective, distinctive groups.

In the skirmish game, each warband has a particular feel that coincides with its alignment, as described above. Using the principle behind each faction, you can generate roleplaying encounters that play to the strengths of skirmish factions. Combine slow, methodical, defensive units and make them lawful evil. Create several encounters of quick, offensively oriented chaotic evil minions. As you repeatedly throw these groups at your characters, the PCs gradually learn the best strategies for dealing with such groups. They will want to cast *detect law* and *detect chaos*, just for the tactical edge such alignment-based information can gain them. Adopting these tactics gives them a feeling of satisfaction for paying attention and remembering their tactical training. This level of tactical play mimics how seasoned adventurers would probably react to such encounters in the course of their adventures. When you break out of the mold and throw fast, high-AC monsters at them, such encounters will be more effective, memorable, and challenging for being starkly different.

USING TERRAIN

The miniatures skirmish game can also teach you how to use terrain more effectively in your campaign. The terrain section in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* provides a wealth of information on varying encounters that many DMs don't use. Once you've played a few skirmish matches, however, you'll realize how tactically important terrain can be, and how it can be put to effective use in your roleplaying game.

The simple presence of difficult terrain on the miniatures terrain tiles makes encounters interesting and tactical. The same principle applies to the roleplaying game. Dungeons should not be made up entirely of smooth stone floors, perfect for tumbling on or charging across. After playing the skirmish game and using terrain to your warband's advantage, consider applying the same lessons to monsters and villains in your roleplaying game.

Why would a beholder smooth out the floors in its lair? It doesn't use them, and it's to the beholder's advantage to make it difficult for invaders arriving by foot to fight and attack. How about aquatic creatures? Why would kuo-toas, with their fantastic maneuverability in the water, ever lair anywhere that wasn't at least partially flooded? In even a few feet of water, they gain a tremendous tactical advantage over interlopers. Burrowing creatures should choose lairs in areas with tight, twisting corridors that allow them to attack from the walls, floor, or ceiling with impunity.

Dungeons should favor the creatures that live there, and this attention to the tactical realities of terrain doesn't have to be limited to the skirmish game. After all, the monsters live there; why wouldn't they make their homes comfortable and defensible? Consider the following additional ideas.

- Flying monsters with ranged attacks favor lairs with high ceilings.
- Burrowing monsters function well in tight, twisting corridors. Such terrain allows them to set up ambushes nearly at will, and introduces the possibility of using cave-ins to separate groups of intruders.
- Creatures with climb speeds favor sheer, smooth walls and ceilings in their lairs. They don't need to make Climb checks all that often, so why make climbing easier for invaders?
- Straight, open ground favors creatures that prefer charging in combat. Minotaurs, mounted opponents, and other monsters that gain benefits from charging live in places that allow them to use that ability frequently.

MAKING IT FAIR

Springing difficult dungeons (in terms of terrain) on your characters is likely to increase your players' frustrations in the short term. You want them to have fun, so allow them an opportunity to recognize troublesome terrain when they first enter it. If they enter a room that requires them to traverse a foot of water, consider giving them a Knowledge (nature), Knowledge (dungeoneering), or Survival check, or, in the right circumstances, even a level check to recognize the effects water will have should combat ensue. Most players won't have memorized the appropriate terrain rules in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, but the adventurers should know better, realizing that wading through water will affect their speed and maneuverability. Providing them with an in-game way to "recall" these effects encourages players to gain ranks in often-ignored skills. Likewise, rogues know that light rubble increases their Tumble and Balance check DCs. Rangers and druids know the effects

of light and heavy undergrowth on movement. Give the characters the chance to make checks to recognize tricky terrain and respond accordingly.

BATTLE GRID TERRAIN

With prepainted miniatures readily available, more groups have begun to use battle grids in their everyday games. Each group is likely to have a different way of representing terrain elements, using a variety of colored pens. With a simple black pen, however, you can quickly sketch every terrain element you might need using the symbology illustrated on page 64.

These symbols provide quickly recognizable elements for your battle grid that are easy to sketch, can be done on the fly, and can be represented using only a black pen. If you have pens of other colors, feel free to use them as you see fit, but having a set of symbols that require only a single pen color means the game can go on even if colored pens aren't available.

One last thing to keep in mind: When drawing on a battle grid, use the lines of the grid to mark the edges of your terrain types. Don't draw lines differentiating terrain through the middle of squares. This small amount of precision saves you a great deal of confusion and debate at the gaming table. If the players can tell at a glance which square is open ground, which is a slope, and which is covered in water, they won't slow your game down by asking questions, or complain later that your map wasn't clear.

DRAWING QUICKLY

Every DM has had to come up with an adventure or encounter on the spur of the moment. If you need to draw a map quickly, you probably don't have time to fill in every square with the relevant symbology for each terrain type. Instead, draw the boundaries around each type of terrain with a solid line, then mark the terrain type with the appropriate symbol near the middle and circle it to indicate that everything in the contiguous area within the boundary shares the same terrain type as the circled symbol in the middle.

OVERLAPPING TERRAIN

The technique described under Drawing Quickly helps keep battle grid clutter to a minimum, but sometimes you need to represent multiple types of terrain in the same area. The symbols presented below can overlap when necessary with little impact.

ELEVATED OR DEPRESSED TERRAIN

Terrain of higher and lower elevation is quite common—so common, in fact, that some terrain elements use elevated or depressed terrain as part of their own features. Indicating an increase or decrease in elevation is simple. At the center of a gradually elevated area, such as a hill, sand dune, or the top of a slope, put a plus sign, followed by a number indicating the height at that elevation in feet. For a gradually depressed area, use a minus sign followed by a number representing the low point of the depression in feet.

If you want to track all the elevation changes on a gradual rise or depression, you can mark the changes at each change in terrain height. Note these changes using dotted lines, and mark the new elevation in feet next to each line. On a steep slope, the change will be marked every inch (every square) on the battle mat (indicating a 5-foot increase in height for each 5 horizontal feet). On a gradual slope, the change will be marked every two inches (2 squares). See Slopes, below, for details.

Simply marking the edge of the drop-off can indicate cliffs, chasms, and trenches. Specify whether the terrain drops down (relative to where the characters are on the map) with a minus sign followed by a number indicating how far down the chasm goes in feet. If the terrain calls for a cliff, use a plus sign followed by a number indicating the new height in feet.

Water depth can also be indicating using dashed lines for each depth change. A minus sign in the middle of the body of water followed by a number indicates the maximum depth. If you would rather the PCs remain unaware of this information, don't include a number.

TREES

Trees in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* come in three varieties: light, medium, and dense. However, medium and dense trees have the same impact on movement, so you don't need symbols to represent all three types. A symbol for light trees and one for dense trees is enough.

A forest canopy can be represented as elevated terrain (see Elevated or Depressed Terrain, above).

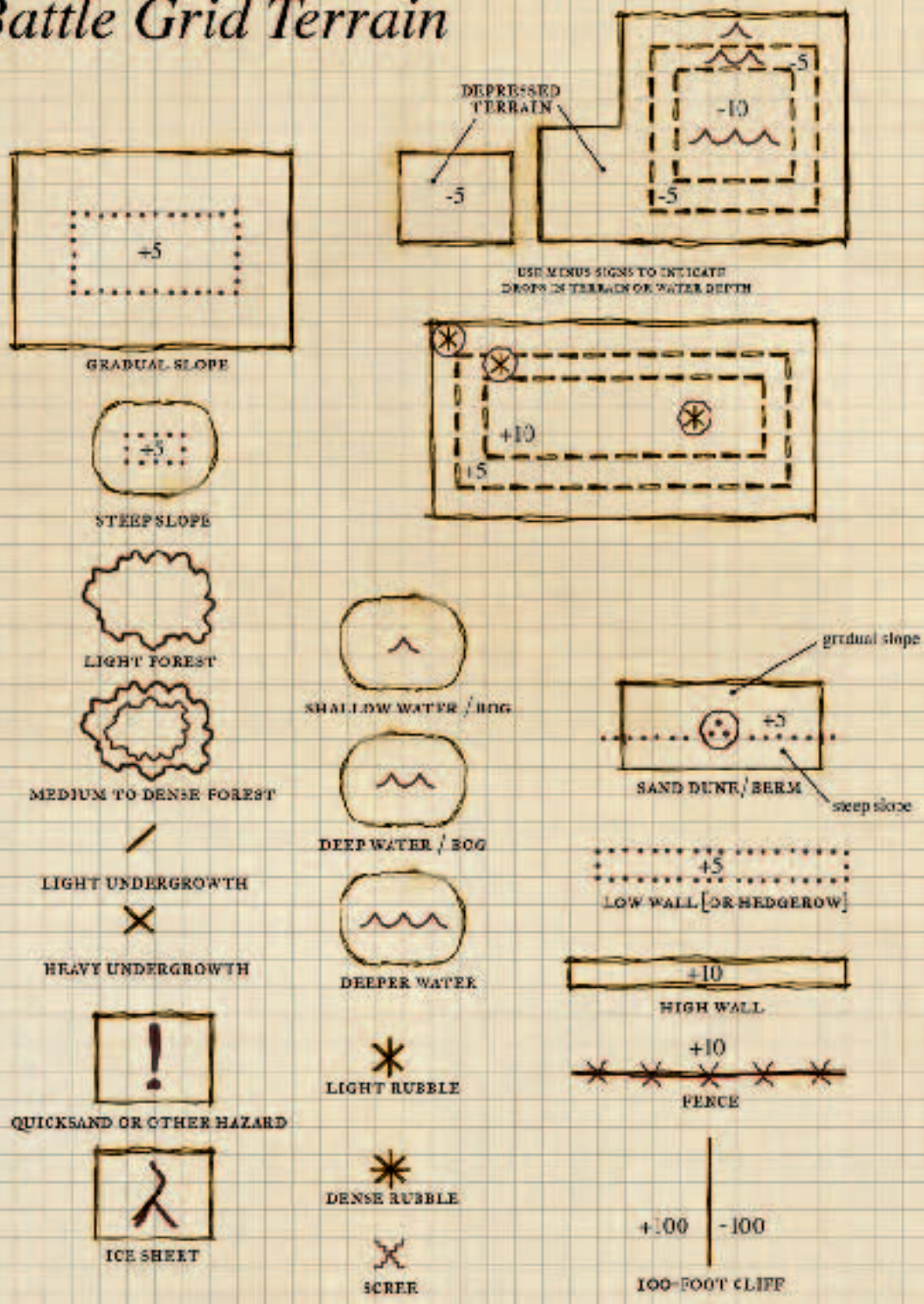
LIGHT AND HEAVY UNDERGROWTH

Light undergrowth can be represented with a single slash drawn diagonally across a square, and heavy undergrowth by a pair of crossed lines (an X).

WATER

Water in D&D essentially comes in three depths that matter: shallow (depths up to 1 foot), deep (depths up to 4 feet), and everything deeper, when all Medium and smaller characters are forced to swim. These water depths should also be used to represent bogs. To indicate a body of water, mark off the area, and signify that the area is filled with water using wave marks. Shallow water is marked with a single wave, deep water by a double wave, and anything deeper than that with a triple wave. Elevation differences in water, should you find it necessary to mark them, can be indicated as described in Elevated or Depressed Terrain, above.

Battle Grid Terrain



To indicate flowing water, use arrows to indicate the direction the water travels, and note the speed of the water next to the arrow.

SLOPES

Slopes come in two varieties: gradual and steep. Steep slopes are those of 45 degrees or more, and gradual slopes are those of less than 45 degrees. To indicate a steep slope, you should have a vertical elevation increase of 5 feet up for each 5 horizontal feet traveled. To mark such a slope, your elevation lines (see Elevated or Depressed Terrain) should be marked every inch on the battle grid. Gradual slopes can be marked every two inches, indicating that the elevation increases by 5 feet for roughly every 10 horizontal feet traveled.

RUBBLE AND SCREE

In addition to light and heavy undergrowth, your characters might encounter other sorts of difficult terrain. Light rubble, dense rubble, and scree all have an impact on character movement and ability checks. Indicate light rubble by marking an X with a single vertical line through its center, dense rubble by an asterisk, and scree by a wavy X.

QUICKSAND

To indicate quicksand, specify the area and mark the center with an exclamation point. This symbol can also be used to mark any sort of terrain hazard. The player characters have many ways of noticing terrain hazards using their skills and other abilities. This symbol is quite effective at calling such a hazard to their attention without necessarily letting them know exactly what it is. Multiple different hazards on the same map can be marked with multiple exclamation points.

HEDGEROWS AND WALLS

The D&D game differentiates two kinds of walls (and hedgerows): low and high. A low wall (5 feet high or lower) can be marked with dotted lines that show the boundaries of the wall. A plus sign on the wall followed by its height in feet lets the players know how high their characters must climb or jump to circumvent the wall.

High walls (more than 5 feet high) should be indicated the same way, except that you use a solid line to mark the edges of the wall. High walls need to be climbed rather than jumped, so the solid line quickly reminds you and your players what skills will come into play in the encounter.

FENCES

Note a fence by drawing a solid line and marking it with an X at various spots along the fence's route. Note the elevation of the fence.

ICE SHEETS

To indicate an ice sheet or other slippery surface, mark off the relevant area and use a forked Y shape to denote the slick conditions. This symbol is also quite effective at noting the area of a *grease* spell.

BERMS AND SAND DUNES

Berms are earthen defensive hills that are steeper on one side than on the other. Sand dunes, while they are natural formations, essentially work the same way. Mark off the area of a dune or berm and indicate the crest with a single dashed line. Notate the peak with a plus sign followed by the elevation in feet, and indicate further that this is not a normal hill by drawing three dots in a circle in the middle of the dune. The elevation increase on one side of a dune or berm is steeper than on the other, so your dashed line should be closer to one side of the formation than to the other.

To differentiate a berm from a dune, mark the edges of a berm as shown in the accompanying diagram.

MORE ENCOUNTER TABLES

The *Dungeon Master's Guide* provides a large number of generic encounter tables for specific terrains. Yet, PCs often find themselves in areas that are anything but generic. The following encounter tables have specific themes that represent some of the iconic locations D&D heroes stumble into time and time again. The monsters and hazards encountered on these tables are (for the most part) standard examples of their kind; unique NPCs and monsters should usually be encountered in climactic areas that the DM has planned out beforehand. These tables can help generate encounters to throw in front of the PCs as they make their way to a climactic area.

Some of the encounters on these tables are not creature encounters, but are instead hazards, obstacles, or structures. Rolling up one of these relatively stationary encounters doesn't make sense if you're generating encounters while the PCs camp, so if you get a result like this, either reroll or skip down to the next encounter on the list.

Abyssal/Infernal Rift (Average EL 6 or 15)

This area features a rift between the Material Plane and either the Infinite Layers of the Abyss (represented by the Abyssal column on the table) or the Nine Hells of Baator (the Infernal column). Foul inhabitants of these planes have begun to creep forth into the area, along with material creatures drawn to the vortex that leads to these dark planes. The closer to the rift the characters draw, the symptoms of the rift become more pronounced, and they should have a greater number of encounters as a result. Most of the encounters in a region of planar bleed will be hostile, but some consist of run-ins with looting bandits or panicked wanderers who have gone astray.

Abyssal/Infernal Rift Encounters (Low to Mid Level)

d%	Abyssal Encounter	Infernal Encounter	EL
01–09	1d4+2 babau	1d3+1 chain devils, 2 bearded devils	10
10–19	1 bebilith	2 erinyes	10
20–29	Half-fiend human cleric	Half-fiend human cleric	9
30–39	1 bodak	1 erinyes	8
40–48	1 succubus	1 hellcat	7
49–56	Bugbear looters	Bugbear looters	7
57–61	1d3+2 dretch	1 chain devil	6
62–69	Lost merchant caravan	Lost merchant caravan	6
70–77	Cloud of acidic vapor	Cloud of burning vapor	5
78–87	Blighted landscape	Blighted landscape	4
88–94	1 quasit	1 imp	2
95–100	1 dretch	1d3+2 lemures	2

Abyssal/Infernal Rift Encounters (High Level)

d%	Abyssal Encounter	Infernal Encounter	EL
01–05	1 balor	1 pit fiend	20
06–11	1 marilith	1d4 horned devils	17
12–22	Nalfeshnee troupe (1 nalfeshnee, 1 hezrou, 1d4+1 vrocks)	1 horned devil	16
23–33	Celestial hunter	Celestial hunter	16
34–50	Glabrezu troupe (1 glabrezu, 1 succubus, 1d4+1 vrocks)	Ice devil troupe (1 ice devil, 1d6+6 bearded devils, 1d4 bone devils)	15
51–65	6 goblin looters	6 goblin looters	15
66–77	1d3+1 hezrou	1 ice devil, 2 hellcats	14
78–85	2 retrievers	2d3+4 hellcats	13
86–95	3 vrocks	1d4 bone devils	12
96–100	1 retriever	1 hamatula	11

Half-Fiend Human Cleric: The cleric can be found on page 147 of the *Monster Manual*.

Bugbear Looters: Bugbears have waylaid a merchant wagon, slaughtering all its members and then looting the wagons. When the characters arrive on the scene, 2d6 of the goblinoids are poking through the remains of several burned-out wagons. A pair of bugbears serves as sentries on the road, and might even spot the PCs before they spot the bugbears. The creatures' initial attitude is hostile, so negotiating with them is difficult (Diplomacy DC 35). The bugbears attack until half their number has been killed. See page 29 of the *Monster Manual* for bugbear statistics.

Celestial Hunter: This is the 11th-level hound archon paladin found on page 17 of the *Monster Manual*. The archon's superiors detected the planar rift and sent him to investigate. His initial attitude is unfriendly, but if the PCs make a DC 25 Diplomacy check, the paladin offers any information he has learned about the region and the cause of the rift. If the result of the Diplomacy check is 40 or higher, the archon offers to join the PCs, provided their goal is also to determine the cause of the rift and put a stop to it. The presence of a cleric or paladin devoted to a good deity in the group grants a +4 bonus on these Diplomacy checks. The characters should receive an experience award for successfully negotiating with the paladin as if they had overcome him in battle.

Lost Merchant Caravan: The caravan consists of a pair of wagons led by a terrified merchant (expert 4) and accompanied by four equally terrified hired hands (expert 1) and four guards (warrior 2). All nine have witnessed the ravages of the region, and the merchant, who is normally familiar with the area, can't find his way out. They've already outrun one attack by lower-level demons or devils; it's only a matter of time before they can't escape or something truly horrific finds them.

Paranoid and desperate, the merchant's initial attitude is hostile, and he must be persuaded (Diplomacy DC 25 or opposed Intimidate) to call his guards to stand down at the sight of the PCs. If the characters manage to convince the merchant that they mean no harm and can help his party, they receive experience as if they had defeated the company in battle. If they lead the merchant from the area personally, he rewards the characters with 500 gp.

Cloud of Acidic/Burning Vapor: The Abyss and Baator are planes unfit for habitation by the normal denizens of the Material Plane. In the area of the vortex, the occasional cloud of acidic or flaming vapor erupts from the ground in a 30-foot-radius spread. Creatures in the area take 8d6 points of acid or fire damage (depending on the type of cloud; see the table above). A successful DC 14 Reflex save negates half the damage.

Blighted Landscape: Signs of the planar rift can be seen throughout the area, growing easily noticeable the closer the PCs draw to the vortex. The blighted landscape is an especially grotesque result of the rift. Trees are warped and seem to be screaming in agony as their limbs drip a viscous substance eerily reminiscent of blood. The earth and rocks are blasted as if by extreme heat, and one or more animal carcasses look to have been torn apart and partially devoured by something with sharp talons and teeth.

Goblin Looters: A thieves' guild from a distant city has sent six of its powerful members to track down a merchant caravan (this could be information they needed to retrieve or an item they were to recover). The guild members are all 10th-level goblin rogues; use the NPC rogue statistics on page 123 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Blue Dragon Domain (Average EL 14)

The blue dragon domain encounter table can be set in any remote mountainous region, or even underground. A pair of mature adult blue dragons lairs in this region, and their presence has had a noticeable impact on the surrounding environment. Few normal animals are to be found here. Aside from the dragons and their large brood, the primary dangers here are the numerous evil cloud giants they've *dominated*, along with the rocs the giants use as scouts or even mounts. Aside from this, only a few monstrous

predators lurk in the region now, feeding on giants when they let down their guard.

Blue Dragon Domain Encounters

d%	Encounter	EL
01–05	1d2 mature adult blue dragons	16
06–10	Dragonslayers	16
11–20	1d8 cloud giants	15
21–30	2d4 yrthaks	14
31–40	2 cloud giant scouts	14
41–55	1d4 juvenile blue dragons	13
56–60	Lost ruins	13
61–70	2d4 elder arrowhawks	13
71–85	1d6 trained rocs	12
86–95	1d2 behirs	8
95–100	Avalanche	7

Dragonslayers: This could be a single 16th-level character, or an adventuring party of four 12th-level characters. In either case, their goal is the same—they seek to kill the blue dragons that lurk in these mountains. Their goals might be honorable, but they could just as easily be born of greed for the dragons' hoard, in which case they'll see other adventurers as dangerous competition.

Cloud Giant Scouts: These two cloud giants ride trained rocs and scour the ground below for intruders.

Lost Ruins: This small ruined village is now inhabited by all sorts of dangerous creatures and hazards. Use the table in Lost Ruins, below, for encounters in this area.

Trained Rocs: These rocs have been trained by the giants to patrol this region. They know to attack anything smaller than Huge size on the ground, and typically carry off such intruders to a nearby giant camp.

Avalanche: In nonsnowy mountains, this could just as well be a rockslide. Rules for these natural disasters appear on page 90 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Graveyard (Average EL 7)

A cemetery is a great place to stage an encounter, especially at night. The characters will be expecting an ambush or surprise, so draw out the tension as long as possible with false alarms and mysterious sights or sounds just at the limits of the characters' perceptions.

Illus. by E. Cox

A blue dragon surveys its domain from a mountain peak

Graveyard Encounters

d%	Encounter	EL
01–04	1d3+1 spectres	10
05–08	1d4 5th-level human ghost fighters	9
09–13	1d3+1 ghasts and 2d6 ghouls (pack)	9
14–16	1 greater shadow	8
17–21	1d4+1 vampire spawn	8
22–30	2d6 ghouls (pack)	7
31–39	1d4+1 shadows (gang)	7
40–47	1d3+2 wights (gang)	7
48–55	1d3+1 ghasts (gang)	6
56–61	1 wraith	5
62–72	2d6 human zombies	5
73–83	2d6 human skeletons	5
84–88	2 graverobbers	4
89–92	1 allip	3
93–97	2 hyenas or coyotes	2
98–100	Covered empty grave	1

Graverobbers: The graverobbers are 2nd-level rogues looking to unearth a corpse to loot or sell to a broker of bodies (or body parts). Use the sample NPC statistics found on page 123 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The graverobbers can be reasoned with, left alone, or attacked. Their initial attitude is unfriendly, requiring a DC 25 Diplomacy check to successfully negotiate with them. They might also be cowed into submission by an Intimidate check, or bluffed into leaving or surrendering.

Hyenas or Coyotes: Hyena statistics can be found on page 274 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide;* use hyena statistics for coyotes. Choose hyenas or coyotes depending on environment. Hyenas favor arid climates, and coyotes temperate climates.

Covered Empty Grave: This is an empty grave covered with canvas in preparation for a burial on the following day. Assuming the PCs visit the graveyard at night, treat this as a camouflaged pit trap, which can be found on page 70 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. In the day, the covered pit is easily spotted; reroll this encounter in that case.

Haunted Building (Average EL 6)

A haunted building is just that—anything from a cottage (with one encounter) to a mansion (with several encounters) to a huge castle (with dozens of encounters). Haunted buildings should have a history and reason for their haunted state, but they don't necessarily need a sinister "boss monster" hidden within; some haunted buildings are simply infested with undead.

Haunting Trap: A haunting trap is a supernatural trap that fills an area with overwhelming emotion such as fear or remorse. Details on haunting traps appear earlier in this chapter on page 43.

Animated Objects: These should be animated suits of armor, pieces of furniture, topiaries in a garden, or even tapestries or statues that have fallen under the influence of the structure's haunting force. Small animated objects can include knives, curtain cords, or statuettes.

Haunted Building Encounters

d%	Encounter	EL
01–05	1 greater shadow	8
06–10	1d4 wraiths	8
11–20	1 5th-level human fighter ghost	7
21–30	1d8 shadows	7
31–40	1d6 allips	6
41–55	1d8 Medium animated objects	6
56–65	Haunting trap	5
66–80	1d8 Small animated objects	5
81–100	Sinister manifestation	—

Sinister Manifestation: This feature can be a strange creaking sound, blood running from the walls, a half-glimpsed figure in a mirror reflection, an unexplained smell of fresh roses, or nearly anything else that fits the building's theme. If the need for game mechanics arises, assume the manifestation functions as a *major image* (caster level 5th).

Humanoid Tribeland (Average EL 2)

This humanoid tribeland is a region of rugged, barren hills with few stunted trees and lots of caves. Several tribes of loosely allied humanoids, many of which use trained animals as guard beasts, dominate these lands. In these areas, the most powerful rule the least powerful; in this case, bugbears rule the orcs, goblins, hobgoblins, kobolds, and gnolls. Humanoids often have unique combinations of character levels, but you should reserve these types for individual enemies and characters the PCs might encounter. The encounters on the following table represent standard humanoids.

Humanoid Tribeland Encounters

d%	Encounter	EL
01–05	1d4 bugbears	4
06–10	1d6 gnolls	3
11–15	Adventurers	3
16–20	1 ogre	3
21–25	1 dire wolf	3
26–35	2d4 hobgoblins	2
36–45	1d8 orcs	2
46–55	2d4 goblins	2
56–60	1 dire weasel	2
61–65	1d4 hyenas	2
66–80	2d4 kobolds	1
81–85	1d6 dire rats	1
86–100	Booby trap	1/2

Adventurers: This is a group of four 1st-level adventurers. They might be seeking out the humanoids to offer their services as mercenaries, or to kill them. Whatever their purpose, they react to another band of adventurers warily at best.

Booby Trap: A booby trap is a minor trap meant to be merely humiliating or startling, but which is sometimes capable of actual harm. Booby traps are detailed earlier in this chapter on page 41.

Lost Ruins (Average EL 12)

Lost ruins can be found anywhere: in remote mountain ranges, tangled jungles, searing deserts, or uncharted islands.

The sample lost ruins presented here happen to be located deep in a trackless desert, but the theme of the creatures encountered fits well with any similar city abandoned long ago and resettled by strange and exotic monsters.

Lost Ruins Encounters

d%	Encounter	EL
01–05	Lich and minions	14
06–10	1d6 dread wraiths	14
11–15	1 beholder	13
16–20	1d4 stone golems	13
21–30	1 Colossal monstrous scorpion	12
31–35	1 purple worm	12
36–45	1d8 hellwasp swarms	12
46–55	1d4 rakshasas	12
56–65	1d4 Gargantuan monstrous scorpions	12
66–70	1d6 gynosphinxes	11
71–80	1d3 behirs	10
81–90	1d8 basilisks	9
91–100	1d4 Huge monstrous scorpions	9

Lich and Minions: This encounter is with an 11th-level lich (possibly one that once lived in the city before it became abandoned) and its 1d6 mohrg servants that accompany it on its mission to protect it from harm. The lich might want to retrieve a magic item from elsewhere in the ruins, or perhaps it simply wants to wander its old homeland.

Sewer (Average EL 3)

Sewer encounters can be used in any region under a city: catacombs, storm drains, ancient ruins, and caverns. Since the PCs, in theory, can easily escape a sewer and retreat to safety in the city above, you can use this table for 1st-level characters with relative safety, assuming your players know when to retreat! This encounter table complements the Slum Encounters table (see below) quite well; both are of the same EL and monsters encountered in one can often be encountered in the other.

Sewer Encounters

d%	Encounter	EL
01–05	1 giant crocodile	4
06–10	1 carrion crawler	4
11–15	1 otyugh	4
16–25	Gang of thieves	4
26–30	1d4 wererats	4
31–35	1 gelatinous cube	3
36–40	1 ghast	3
41–50	Roll on Slum Encounters table	3
51–55	1d6 ghouls	3
56–65	2d6 dire rats	3
66–75	1 rat swarm	2
76–85	1d8 stirges	2
86–90	Poisonous gas	2
91–95	1d6 Medium monstrous centipedes	2
96–100	1d8 Small monstrous centipedes	1

Gang of Thieves: This is an encounter with 1d8 1st-level rogues or 1d4 2nd-level rogues. Typically, these rogues belong to a thieves' guild, but sometimes they're just creepy thugs.

Poisonous Gas: A pocket of poisonous gas or rancid air has become caught in a section of sewer. The gas is invisible but has a strong, acrid stench; a creature with the scent ability automatically notices the proximity of poisonous gas before entering the dangerous

A giant crocodile rises up out of the sludge in a sewer tunnel

Illus. by M. Cotie

area. Anyone breathing poisonous gas must make a DC 13 Fortitude save or take 1d4 points of Strength damage; the initial and secondary damage is the same. Poisonous gas pockets typically fill 1d6×10 feet of tunnel and last for 3d6 minutes before dissipating naturally.

Slum (Average EL 3)

Of all the various districts found in fantasy cities, the slum districts are the likeliest places for the characters to run into someone or something looking for a fight. You can use this encounter table to generate combat encounters in other districts of a city as well, but you shouldn't make a practice of it. The threat of dangerous encounters is one of the things that defines a slum and makes it a place where only the desperate would want to live.

Slum Encounters

d%	Encounter	EL
01–05	1d4 wererats	4
06–15	Gang of thieves	4
16–25	Roll on Sewer Encounters table	3
26–35	Press gang	3
36–40	1 lunatic	3
41–50	1d6 feral riding dogs	3
51–55	1 rat swarm	2
56–70	1d8 dire rats	2
71–85	1 pickpocket	1
86–100	1 diseased beggar	1

Gang of Thieves: This is an encounter with 1d8 1st-level rogues or 1d4 2nd-level rogues. Typically, these rogues belong to a thieves' guild, but they could just as easily be pirates, gypsies, or unscrupulous city guards.

Press Gang: A press gang consists of a group of 1d6 1st-level warriors that seeks to overwhelm victims and force them into hard labor on a ship. In landlocked cities, they could be a gang hired to collect replacements for a workhouse.

Lunatic: A lunatic encounter is typically an encounter with a 3rd-level rogue who works alone, mugging people or simply killing them to satisfy some debased urge.

Pickpocket: This is an encounter with a lone 1st-level rogue with Sleight of Hand +8. The pickpocket usually chooses a fighter, cleric, wizard, or similar character who doesn't look particularly observant; if caught, the pickpocket tries to flee.

Diseased Beggar: This is a 1st-level commoner who is infected with the shakes or slimy doom (or any other disease that infects by contact). The beggar might not look particularly diseased (a DC 15 Heal check correctly interprets the sores or tremors); anyone who takes pity on him and donates money comes in contact with him and must make a Fortitude save to avoid catching the illness.

Sylvan Forest (Average EL 7)

The standard sylvan forest is a temperate, trackless, and remote woodland not settled by humanoids. The fey magic that suffuses the forest keeps the trees and vegetation alive in unusual climates, so a sylvan forest can be found in areas such as mountaintops, deserts, arctic tundras, or even underground.

Sylvan Forest Encounters

d%	Encounter	EL
01–05	Fey mound	9
06–15	1 treant	8
16–25	2d4 pixies	8
26–40	2d4 centaurs	8
41–50	1d8 pegasi	7
51–60	1d6 satyrs with pipes	7
61–65	Fey ring	7
66–70	1 lillend	7
71–75	1 nymph	7
76–85	1d6 unicorns	6
86–100	1d6 dryads	6

Fey Mound: Fey mounds are the burial locations of the fey. These magical regions are treated as hallowed ground (as the *hallow* spell) and have additional effects such as *lesser geas, deeper slumber, hallucinatory terrain,* and *confusion*. In addition, all fey mounds are guarded. To determine what kind of guardian protects the mound, roll again on the table (rerolling any result of fey mound).

Fey Ring: A fey ring is a dangerous area infused with potent fey magic and delineated by a ring of small mushrooms. Fey rings are detailed on page 42.

Underground Cavern (Average EL 7)

The dark places beneath the surface can prove deadly to the unwary. The bulk of the encounters below are for mid-level characters for good reason. Low-level PCs venture underground at their own risk. As a haven for the vast majority of D&D's most popular, famous monsters, underground terrain has a great deal of appeal. Don't hesitate to spring one nasty surprise after another on the characters. Roll on the table below frequently, and don't hesitate to add a favorite monster of your own to the list.

Underground Cavern Encounters

d%	Encounter	EL
01–08	1 aboleth and 2d3+2 skum[1]	9
09–20	4 drow raiders (slaving party)	9
21–28	1 greater earth elemental	9
29–34	1 mind flayer	8
35–43	1 umber hulk	7
44–51	1 spectre	7
52–61	Kuo-toa patrol (1d3+1 plus 1 3rd-level whip)	7
62–68	1 drider	7
69–75	1d3+1 violet fungi (patch)	6
76–85	10 dwarf warriors (patrol)	5
86–94	1d4+1 troglodytes (clutch)	4
95–100	Toxic mushroom tangle	3

1 This encounter should be used only in an environment featuring an underground lake, river, or other large body of water. Reroll if you roll this encounter in an improper environment.

Drow Raiders: When first encountered, the initial attitude of these slave traders is hostile. Only the most charismatic of player characters (someone who makes a DC 35 Diplomacy check) can convince the dark elves not to attack. Even then, they're likely to betray the characters at the first opportunity.

The following statistics block, presented in a new format, describes an individual drow raider. For details of the new format, see page 173.

Drow Raider **CR 5**

Male drow fighter 4
NE Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Drow Sign Language, Elven

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15
hp 26 (4 HD)
Immune *sleep;* **SR** 15
Resist +2 on saves against enchantments
Fort +6, **Ref** +2, **Will** +1 (+3 against spells and spell-like abilities)
Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk rapier +7 (1d6+4/18–20 plus poison)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +6
Atk Options poison (DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; 1d20+4 to overcome SR): 1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, faerie fire*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11
Feats Dodge, Great Fortitude, Mobility, Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Specialization (rapier)
Skills Climb +7, Jump +7, Listen +2, Search +2, Spot +2
Possessions masterwork rapier, masterwork chain shirt, light shield, masterwork hand crossbow with 20 poisoned bolts, 2d6 gp

Dwarf Warriors: These dwarves are within a mile of the stronghold they call home. Their initial attitude is unfriendly unless one of the characters is also a dwarf, in which case their attitude is indifferent. At the very least, they want to escort the characters to their home for interrogation. The dwarves are not hostile and do not attack unless provoked. The characters can convince the dwarves to let them go on their way with a successful DC 25 Diplomacy check. A DC 40 check convinces the dwarves to give the PCs directions or invite them back to their home for a free night of dwarven hospitality and the opportunity to replenish supplies (and possibly purchase items of fine dwarf craftsmanship).

Toxic Mushroom Tangle: The monstrous denizens of the underground aren't its only threats. Patches of toxic subterranean flora abound, and the toxic mushroom patch represents just such an encounter. Characters can make DC 20 Knowledge (nature) checks to recognize the threat before entering the patch. Those who enter the area are exposed to a cloud of toxic spores. Such characters must make DC 15 Fortitude saves or be exposed to the equivalent of insanity mist (initial damage 1d4 Wis, secondary damage 2d6 Wis).

Wizards' Guild (Average EL 10)

A wizards' guild can cover a wide range of similar locations. It might represent a large guild located in a city, a remote tower run by a wizard and his numerous apprentices, or a large monastery or magical school. This guild is lawful evil in alignment; guilds of different alignments have different outsiders found within their walls.

Wizards' Guild Encounters

d%	Encounter	EL
01–05	Guildmaster	12
06–10	1 barbed devil	11
11–20	1 stone golem	11
21–30	1 rakshasa	10
31–40	Wizard	10
41–45	Spell turret trap	10
46–50	1d4 efreeti	10
51–60	1d4 erinyes	10
61–70	1d8 bearded devils	9
71–85	1 shield guardian	8
86–100	1d6 apprentice wizards	8

Guildmaster: The guildmaster, a 12th-level wizard, wanders the hall of his guild to keep an eye on his students and guild members. He is giving another group a tour (determine type by rolling on the table a second time, rerolling any result of guildmaster) 15% of the time.

Wizard: This is one of the guild's teachers or researchers. Typically, a wizard is encountered as she wanders from one area of the guild to another, absently muttering to herself or reading a scroll of ancient runes.

Spell Turret Trap: These dangerous magical traps are detailed on page 45.

Apprentice Wizards: This encounter is with a number of 5th-level wizards; they react to dangerous-looking intruders by running to find the nearest senior wizard for aid.

Sample Treasure Hoards

You don't always have time to build up tailor-made treasures for all the monsters the PCs fight, especially those that they might encounter as a result of a random encounter in the wilderness. These sample treasure hoards can be used as is, or you can adjust them as you see fit.

EL 1 (300 gp)

Coins: 4,544 cp, 646 sp, 55 gp
Goods: 2 gold bars (10 gp each), freshwater pearl (10 gp), carved wooden bookends (80 gp)
Item: Flask of holy (or unholy) water (25 gp)

EL 2 (600 gp)

Coins: 1,400 cp, 220 sp, 124 gp, 3 pp

Goods: Shard of obsidian (10 gp), copper pyramid inscribed with religious runes (50 gp)

Items: *Potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of spider climb*

EL 3 (900 gp)

Coins: 3,569 cp, 743 sp, 171 gp

Goods: Golden pearl (100 gp), 2 rock crystals (50 gp each)

Items: 6 flasks of alchemist's fire (20 gp each) in marble, velvet-lined coffer (225 gp), scale mail (25 gp), *oil of magic weapon* (50 gp)

EL 4 (1,200 gp)

Coins: 1,450 sp, 165 gp, 8 pp

Goods: Blue quartz necklace (45 gp)

Items: Masterwork longsword (315 gp), *elixir of sneaking*, *potion of mage armor*, scroll of *knock*

EL 5 (1,600 gp)

Coins: 1,135 cp, 866 sp, 437 gp, 24 pp

Goods: 2 red spinels (100 gp each), bloodstone (50 gp), ivory and onyx chess set (500 gp)

Items: Scroll of *bless* (25 gp), *potion of endure elements* (50 gp)

EL 6 (2,000 gp)

Coins: 2,650 sp, 310 gp, 12 pp

Goods: Silver dining plate (100 gp)

Items: Masterwork padded armor (155 gp), *potion of bull's strength*, scroll of *protection from energy*, *wand of detect magic*

EL 7 (2,600 gp)

Coins: 556 sp, 894 gp, 35 pp

Goods: 3 pieces of amber (100 gp each), pair of silver and white gold candlesticks (300 gp), gold locket with hand-painted portrait of female elf (250 gp)

Items: Masterwork battleaxe (155 gp), *potion of cat's grace* (300 gp), scroll of *mirror image* (3rd) (150 gp)

EL 8 (3,400 gp)

Coins: 3,540 sp, 531 gp, 25 pp

Goods: 2 pearls (100 gp each), carved redwood locket with gold leaf (150 gp), silver unicorn pendant (90 gp)

Items: *Cloak of protection +1*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *wand of charm person*

EL 9 (4,500 gp)

Coins: 405 sp, 1,269 gp, 44 pp

Goods: 2 black pearls (500 gp each), 1 tourmaline (100 gp), 3 bloodstones (50 gp each), small painting of a landscape (200 gp), gnome-crafted porcelain urn (150 gp)

Items: *Cloak of resistance +1* (1,000 gp), scroll of *spider climb* (150 gp)

EL 10 (5,800 gp)

Coins: 4,230 sp, 800 gp, 31 pp

Goods: 10 bloodstones (50 gp each), single pearl earring (150 gp), silver ring set with jade (300 gp)

Items: *+1 light crossbow*, masterwork dagger (302 gp), 2 doses of antitoxin (100 gp), darkwood buckler (65 gp), scroll of *searing light*

EL 11 (7,500 gp)

Coins: 2,370 gp, 163 pp

Goods: 2 deep blue spinels (500 gp each), 2 pieces of amber (100 gp each), 1 peridot (50 gp), tome of elven fables (50 gp), silver and moonstone ring (100 gp)

Items: *Heward's handy haversack* (2,000 gp), *oil of bless weapon* (100 gp)

EL 12 (9,800 gp)

Coins: 1,250 gp, 40 pp

Goods: 5 amethysts (100 gp each), aquamarine (500 gp), platinum chain bracelet (850 gp)

Items: *Pearl of power* (2nd-level spell), *potion of barkskin +2*, *ring of protection +1*

EL 13 (13,000 gp)

Coins: 2,725 gp, 513 pp

Goods: 3 golden yellow topazes (500 gp each), 2 sard-onyxes (50 gp each), 2 pieces of obsidian (10 gp each), mahogany chest inlaid with mother-of-pearl (300 gp)

Items: *Potion of cat's grace* (300 gp), *+1 chain shirt* (525 gp), *boots of the winterlands* (2,500 gp)

EL 14 (17,000 gp)

Coins: 790 gp, 54 pp

Goods: Masterwork cold iron longsword (330 gp), 4 garnets (100 gp each), 2 black pearls (500 gp each), gold necklace (550 gp), bejeweled masterwork lap-harp (750 gp)

Items: *+1 glamered chain shirt*, *+1 keen scimitar*, scroll of *fireball*

EL 15 (22,000 gp)

Coins: 3,520 gp, 624 pp

Goods: Emerald (1,000 gp), 2 gold statues of a human dancer (200 gp each), platinum holy symbol of Moradin (500 gp)

Items: *+1 silvered greataxe* (2,340 gp), *amulet of natural armor +2* (8,000 gp)

EL 16 (28,000 gp)

Coins: 1,355 gp, 16 pp

Goods: 14 pearls (100 gp each), porphyry nymph statuette (800 gp), gold armband with dragon engraving (1,200 gp), ivory and obsidian chess set (600 gp)

Items: Adamantine bastard sword (3,035 gp), *+1 shadow elven chain*, *potion of displacement*, *ring of jumping*, *lesser metamagic rod* (enlarge), *gauntlets of ogre power*

Illus. by A. Swekel

Some groups have little time for the world outside the dungeon, emerging from the depths only long enough to seek out healing, swap magic items, and find a vault to stash their treasure.

Others prefer a game in which their heroic exploits have an impact on the world around them. They want to explore the nooks and crannies of your setting, take part in exciting continuing plot threads, and rise in influence as well as power. By weaving a campaign around the PCs' adventures, you make their exploits more memorable, lending them a sense of importance like those of the great heroes of myth and literature.

You can further enhance this feeling by creating a vivid setting for the PCs to interact with. By taking a few key details from the real history of the Middle Ages, you can add a sense of reality to their exploits.

BEGINNING AND ENDING A CAMPAIGN

Some of the most entertaining campaigns ever run developed spontaneously, without much forethought on the part of their Dungeon Masters. You could run a blazingly successful campaign simply by taking the PCs through a basic introductory scenario and responding to the interests of the players as they arise. You could throw them at a series of unconnected published adventures, creating setting elements and themes only as the need arises, improvising your way to an epic rivaling *The Iliad* in breadth and depth.

If you're like most DMs, however, you find spontaneity easier to manage when you plan ahead for it. By making a few simple decisions at the outset, you can give your campaign a sense of shape, turning it into an experience players can get only from you.

YOUR PLAYERS

Your campaign design decisions will differ depending on your familiarity with your players.

Established Groups

If you're running a game for an established group with known quirks and preferences, your choices must factor in the advantages and drawbacks of familiarity.

If you know your group well, you can take their specific tastes into account as you plan. You know how much emphasis they prefer to place on setting and story, and how much on smiting

monsters. Chapter 1 contains advice and information on these topics.

Knowing their tastes, you can build hooks into the narrative guaranteed to get their juices flowing. If you happen to know that a few of your players are currently on a pirate kick, it might be time to dust off your long-simmering plans for a swashbuckling campaign.

Likewise, you're already aware of your players' rock-bottom demands for a setting. If a key player loses interest when she can't play a ninja or fight drow, you know you must make both dark elves and Japanese-style assassins central to the action. If you're running a game for straight-ahead combat enthusiasts, you'll be planning for little nuggets of plot between stretches of swordplay. Conversely, a group mostly interested in intrigue and character development requires you to focus most of your planning on interesting NPCs, the schemes they're hatching, and the social context in which they will be hatched.

Recruiting New Players

You might, on the other hand, be starting out as a DM with a group of neophyte players. You might have lost the players from your last campaign to attrition or scheduling hassles. Perhaps you moved to a new town and find yourself having to recruit players from scratch.

Though some DMs are happy to run for larger or smaller groups, the game tends to work best with four to six players. Unless you belong to a gang of friends who hang out together constantly, whether or not they're involved in a Dungeons & Dragons game, you can expect to face attendance problems. If you recruit only the number of players you can comfortably handle, you might soon find yourself with less than a full house as players drop out or are unable to attend the occasional session. Instead, start with two or three more players than you actually want in your group. Soon the realities of busy lives will intrude, and the average number of players per session will fall within your ideal range.

In a school or university setting, you might be able to plug into an existing network of players. See if a game club operates out of your school or local library. If not, give some thought to creating one. A few photocopied flyers could set the spark for an entire player community.

Often, specialty game and hobby stores are hubs of player activity. Many provide bulletin boards for DMs to post recruitment notices. Others run in-store game nights and would be more than happy to schedule times and table spaces for you to run your campaign on the premises. Even store owners who provide neither can acquaint you with the local convention scene and likely point you toward any existing clubs.

Playing at a club or in a retail location gives you access to a ready pool of players, but it also curtails your control over who sits at your table. It's tougher to uninvite a disruptive player when you play in a semipublic space. You will also find it more difficult to maintain focus when running a game in an open environment where customers can traipse in and out at will. Both you and your players will have to concentrate on screening out conversations taking place around you. Especially extroverted DMs might enjoy the challenge this environment provides; you can play to the audience, even bringing them in for walk-on roles as crowd members and the like.

The biggest network for organized D&D play is the RPGA. By joining as a DM or a player, you can not only sharpen your skills but also put yourself in touch with local gamers, some of whom will make fine recruits for your home campaign. For more information on the RPGA, visit the Wizards of the Coast website at www.wizards.com.

The Internet is a gold mine for an isolated DM in need of new players. Using the search engine of your choice, you can quickly find any number of D&D and general roleplaying sites, many of which maintain dedicated player-recruitment pages or forums where you can post recruitment ads.

If you live in a large city or university town bursting with likely players, you can tailor your ads to attract players whose tastes mirror your own. You can create your campaign concept (see below) and then craft fifty words or so of pithy ad copy to reel them in. An ad screaming out for aficionados of good old hack-and-slashery will attract a different crowd of applicants than one promising gritty political intrigue in a historically accurate Renaissance Italy.

If you live in a small town, you might have to widen your pitch to attract players of all stripes. With a smaller pool of potential recruits, you can't afford to narrow your focus to a few types of players. Aim instead to assemble a mixed group, preparing to run a campaign with elements that appeal to all tastes. Send out a simple call for D&D players. Start by running a basic campaign with a standard ratio of fighting and looting to story and character, and set in an established fantasy world, such as the Greyhawk or Forgotten Realms campaign setting.

Once you've been running for your players for a while and have drawn a bead on their tastes, you can consider restarting from scratch, with a unique concept geared directly to them.

CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE

Start your creation process by choosing between two possible campaign structures: an episodic campaign or a continuity campaign.

Episodic Campaigns

Episodic campaigns are composed of unrelated adventures. The only common element between the adventures

Illus. by G. Kubic

The minotaur at the end of the labyrinth is the final challenge in this adventure

is the presence of the PCs. In some cases, minor supporting characters might recur from one adventure to the next, but these NPCs are walk-on characters, such as shop owners, healers, and sages, who exist primarily to provide services to the party. Adventures remain self-contained; if an element of a PC's background history comes up in play, it is resolved immediately, never to be revisited. Each adventure has a distinct beginning and ending. When an adventure is over, its details can be forgotten. In some cases, PCs might have an ongoing problem or goal, such as a curse, a grudge against a local warlord, or an intelligent weapon with its own agenda. These remain complications to other adventures and never become the focus of entire sessions unto themselves. An episodic campaign resembles a TV series such as *Law & Order*, where no knowledge of one episode is required to understand another.

An episodic campaign is a good choice for a group if, due to spotty attendance, you're running a game for an ever-shifting roster of players. An episodic campaign plays to the preferences of gamers focused on power accumulation, fighting, puzzles, rebellion, and oddball behavior. Since each adventure typically begins with a scene in which the PCs are pointed toward a dungeon complex or otherwise given a specific assignment, an episodic campaign works well for reactive players who like to have their objectives supplied to them.

If you run your game best with detailed adventure notes, an episodic campaign suits your talents perfectly. Short, disconnected adventures offer fewer opportunities for players to hit you with plot curveballs you're not ready to handle.

An episodic structure does not require you to run only one-session adventures. A well-stocked dungeon environment often takes more than one session to clear out. The adventures, not the sessions, remain unconnected.

Continuity Campaigns

In a continuity campaign, one adventure leads to another, creating an overall story arc that builds over time. The PCs forge links to the world, advancing their relationships to key NPCs. Players must remember key characters and moments from one session to the next. Apparently minor details introduced in one session might turn out to be critically important weeks or months later. The PCs advance their own personal storylines as well as those of the group. As a continuity campaign develops, the beginnings and endings of specific adventures become more difficult to

discern. Often you will run parallel plot lines at the same time, moving some to the foreground while others bubble away on the back burner. Players become self-starters, picking up each session where they left off and deciding which story elements to follow up next.

For this reason, a continuity campaign appeals to self-motivated players who like their PCs to seek out their own trouble. A continuity campaign's emphasis on plot and setting elements attracts players interested in story, character, and exploration. Such a campaign is easiest to maintain when you can rely on the regular attendance of a core group of players. If you have such active players, they require a reactive DM, so if your strength lies in improvisation, this structure is for you.

Stand-alone adventures can be incorporated into a continuity campaign, but typically you will adapt adventures created by others into your story arc. For example, you're running a campaign in which the PCs have infiltrated the inner circle of an evil warlord. You purchase a published adventure detailing a haunted dwarf keep. The adventure assumes that the players are simply raiding the keep to loot it and lay to rest its horrifying ghosts. You create a new entry point into the adventure: The warlord, suspecting the PCs of betrayal, sends them to the keep to retrieve a nonexistent treasure, hoping the dwarf ghosts will dispose of them. The PCs still complete the adventure as written, but when they learn that the treasure is imaginary, they have advanced the overall story, possibly learning that the warlord no longer trusts them.

CAMPAIGN CONCEPT

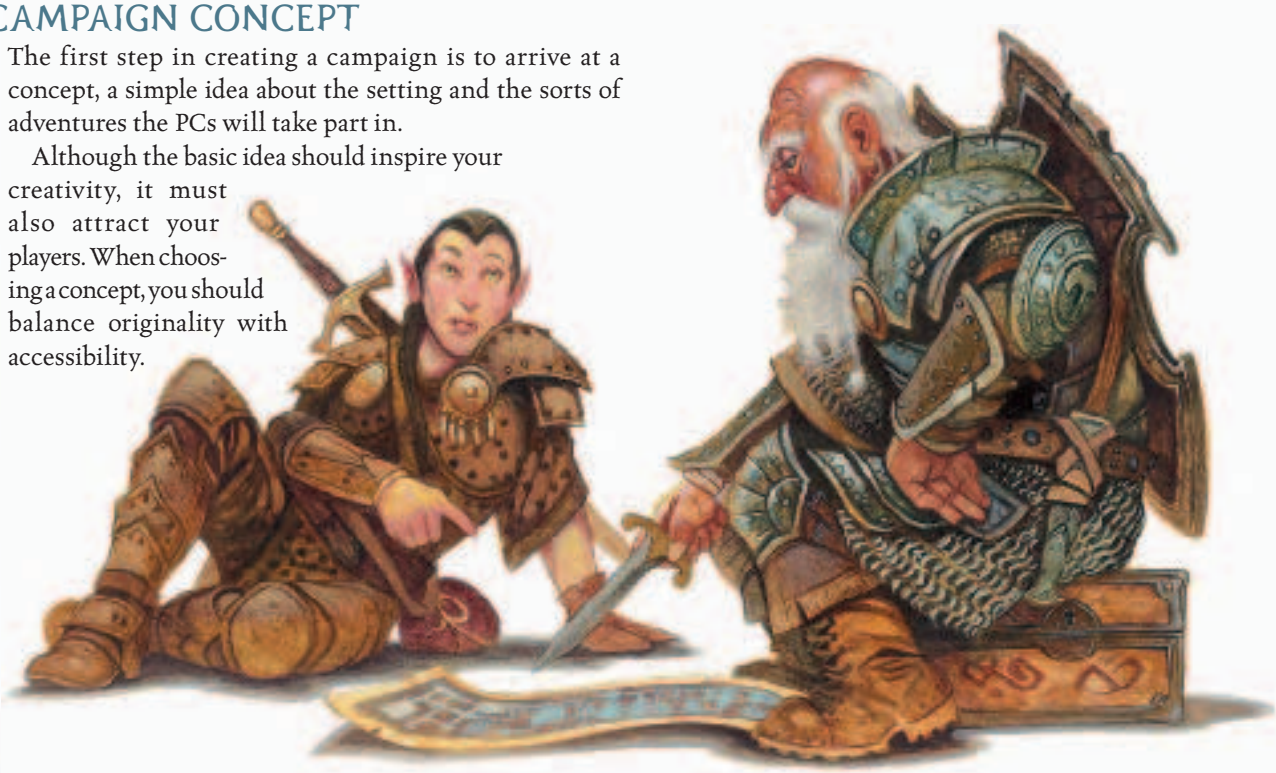
The first step in creating a campaign is to arrive at a concept, a simple idea about the setting and the sorts of adventures the PCs will take part in.

Although the basic idea should inspire your creativity, it must also attract your players. When choosing a concept, you should balance originality with accessibility.

If you're just starting out as a DM, or are running a game for relatively inexperienced players, a wildly original campaign idea is more trouble than it's worth. Originality won't impress new gamers; they have no standard experience to measure it against. You should familiarize yourself with regular play before trying to work variations on it. If you've been running games for years and feel a little jaded, but have recruited a crew of new players, your attempts to get fancy might confuse them. Instead, cast your mind back to your days as a beginning gamer and remember the sense of wonder that a simple kobold encounter or a trip to the corner magic shop provided. Challenge yourself to make the game as clear and accessible as possible for new players. See how simple you can make their starter campaign. Keep them entertained now, and they will be ready for your quirkier ideas later.

Veteran players might be open to more adventurous campaign concepts that set your game apart from the others they have experienced over the years. They might be more accepting of experimentation with house rules or restrictions on the types of characters they can play. Keep in mind, though, that fans of story, character, and setting are more interested in campaign variation than are combat enthusiasts, puzzle solvers, and brilliant planners (who get their thrills at the encounter level).

No matter how offbeat your concept is, boil it down into as few words as possible. A concept that can't be summed up in a sentence or two will be more confusing than memorable.



Illus. by W. O'Connor

In a continuity campaign, elders pass on their knowledge to up-and-coming adventurers

Steal freely from your favorite books and movies. A concept related to something your players already like and enjoy will get their imaginations kick-started quicker than an idea they have never encountered before.

The concept need not suggest many months of play; it can summarize a simple situation you intend to develop into something more elaborate as the game continues.

A few sample campaign concepts appear below.

- The people of a farming village hire adventurers to protect them from the bandit inhabitants of a nearby cave complex.
- A lord given a land grant in wild territory hires adventurers to slay the creatures that infest it.
- Mythic characters play at war and politics in a land reminiscent of ancient Greece.
- The sons and daughters of a king form an adventuring party to increase their powers; the one eventually declared the mightiest becomes heir to the throne.
- The PCs work for a magic item dealer, recovering wands and relics from adventurers who are behind on their installment payments.
- History's great heroes are summoned together by a wizard seeking allies against the Dark One, but due to a miscalculation in the spell, they appear as their young, inexperienced selves.
- A hundred years after Chicago is overrun by orcs, intrepid raiders armed with magic and machine guns scale its massive walls on a hostage rescue mission.

Party Concept

Some of the above examples impose on the players a party concept. The PCs are more than a miscellaneous assemblage of heroic looters; they start play with connections to one another and a common goal. This approach requires collaboration between the players as they create their characters. The PCs start play knowing one another and appearing to some degree in each other's background stories.

Some party concepts might impose restrictions on the players. For example, if all the PCs are heirs to a throne, that concept implies that they are all of the same race. Some players might chafe at restrictive group concepts, while others enjoy the novelty. If you have one player who always must be an elf and another who will play only a dwarf, an "heirs to the throne" campaign won't work.

A group concept can reduce disagreements between players. They might still debate how things are to be done, but at least they can all work toward the same goals.

Adding replacement PCs to a campaign in progress can be tough if you're using a restrictive party concept. If the PCs are the last surviving members of a particular thieves' guild, how do you fit in a new player several sessions later? You might end up adding a new character who isn't as important to the plot as the others, or explaining why another survivor has suddenly surfaced.

The easiest party concept to work with is the common patron: The PCs are all employees of the same patron, working to further his goals. The PCs have looser ties to one another and are no more than coworkers. This helps if you have a high death rate among PCs or players who drop in or out; the patron can always introduce a new hire to the rest of his crew.

CAMPAIGN CLOSURE

If your campaign concept is based on a narrative idea, such as the completion of a specific goal, it will be a continuity campaign. You might also consider declaring ahead of time that it's a closed campaign, with a definite end point. When the PCs attain the goal, the campaign is over.

Using the above examples, the "heir to the throne" and "Chicago raiders" concepts could easily be closed. The first

CAMPAIGN PACK

As you devise your campaign, compile pertinent information about it in a campaign pack, a handout you will supply to the players. Include in it all the information the players need to create their characters. It should tell players what to expect from your game. Focus especially on aspects of your game that differ from the norm and from campaigns you have run for them in the past. The campaign pack creates your players' expectations.

Start off with the campaign concept, expressing it as simply as you can. Because you don't want to give away your big secrets, the concept you present to the players might differ from the one in your own notes. Still, it should reveal as much as you can about your premise without spoiling surprises. Make it as exciting as possible—think of it as an advertising blurb for your game.

If you have a party concept, include that as well. Provide details about whether the campaign is open-ended or closed, its starting level, any restrictions on common choices of class or race, and any new or nonstandard choices available. Lay out modifications to the alignment system, if any, and provide a list of your house rules, as well as references to any expanded rules you wish to bring in from other D&D products.

Include a basic introduction to your setting, focusing on information of direct relevance to starting characters. If the history of your setting plays a role in upcoming plot lines, include it. If it's just cool background detail, leave it out. Do the same with lists of prominent people, myths of the gods, rumors and legends, or any other background data you might have generated. Keep it short, sweet, and to the point; most players will merely skim your document if it tops out at a great length.

Even if you're running for eager players who devour your every word, you still should distill this material to its most important points. The process of sorting the central ideas from the side issues is as much for your benefit as it is for that of the players.

To make it more enticing, jazz up your campaign pack with maps and clip art illustrations.

ends when the new monarch is chosen, and the second when the hostages are rescued.

This choice increases the sense of excitement, as players move steadily toward a final conclusion. It appeals strongly to story-oriented players.

Closed campaigns are a fun choice if your group changes games and DMs on a regular basis, or if you know you'll be able to run only a limited number of sessions. They allow you to experiment with far-out campaign concepts that might not sustain themselves over the long haul.

However, power accumulators, who like to dream of what their character sheets will look like fifteen levels from now, tend to dislike closed campaigns. They want their characters to grow as powerful as possible, extending the careers of their heroes for as long as they can. Even if your group's average campaign lasts only a few months, they want to think their characters have the potential to continue forever.

You could turn this attitude to your advantage, though. Any entertainer knows to leave the audience wanting more. If a closed campaign really clicks, you can always create a sequel, perhaps picking up with the characters years or even decades later. Just as they think their adventuring days are over, you can find a new threat to occupy them.

STARTING LEVEL

If you're a new Dungeon Master or are running a game for new players, always start their characters off at 1st level. Character progression is integral to the game's learning curve. Only when the group knows the game thoroughly should you consider starting a party at mid or high level.

Certain groups prefer play at a particular level. Some like the sense of constant danger endured by fragile, low-level characters. Others prefer the range of options available from 4th to 7th level. Still others enjoy the wild unpredictability of a high-level game where the powers fly left and right and interact in surprising ways. If your group has a preferred play level, consider starting a new campaign a level or two below that.

Exotic campaign concepts might require PCs who are already accomplished heroes. The mythic Greece idea mentioned above calls for a gang of demigods. The concept suffers if the PCs can barely take a few punches. However, fidelity to a concept is less important than the group's general preferences and familiarity with the rules. If a concept requires the group to play at a level they aren't ready for or don't like, find a new concept.

RACE AND CLASS REQUIREMENTS

Some exotic campaign concepts require restrictions on the races and classes available to PCs. A few examples of such concepts:

- The PCs stumble onto clues to the centuries-old disappearance of the world's elves.
- When demons infest a monastery, an elite squad of mace-wielding clerics moves in to drive them back to the infernal regions—not suspecting that this event heralds a full-scale invasion from the nether depths.
- Forest-dwelling outlaws protect England from Prince John's depredations while his brother, Richard the Lion-Hearted, is off at the crusades. No nonhumans or historically inappropriate character classes (barbarians, druids, monks, sorcerers, or wizards) need apply.

Tread carefully before restricting player choice. If you have a player who always creates an elf or a bard, a campaign that doesn't allow for her favorite character type won't appeal to her. If your campaign concept derives its uniqueness mostly from the restrictions it imposes on players, don't be surprised if your group responds without enthusiasm.

PLANNING FOR THE END

Adventure stories can be expressed as questions. Will Robin Hood save Maid Marian? Can Jack slay the giant? Will the Argonauts find the golden fleece?

To determine when a closed campaign will end, express your narrative campaign concept in question form. The campaign concludes when the PCs answer that question.

Inform the players that you're running a closed campaign. They should also know the victory conditions in advance so they can plan their character progressions accordingly and, as the end draws near, make all-out sacrifices to achieve their goals.

Players need not fully understand the campaign-ending victory conditions from the outset. Increase the stakes as the campaign progresses. For example, the PCs at first might think they're merely pursuing personal vengeance against the nomadic raiders who razed their village. A few adventures in, they discover that the raiders are preparing a massive invasion of the civilized realms. As the climax approaches, they further learn that the nomad leader is in thrall to an apocalyptic deity, and that if he destroys a particular temple in the capital city, he will bring about the end of the world.

Plan carefully to see that the conclusive scenes of a closed campaign pay off. By centering the entire campaign on a set of victory conditions, you're promising a big, exciting finish. Prepare that final sequence exhaustively. It must be exquisitely balanced, so the PCs don't blow through the opposition too easily or get swatted like flies. Especially in a high-level game, it's easy to be caught off guard by the effects of PCs' and creatures' abilities, particularly in combination with unusual encounter conditions. Set up the climactic sequence so that your resident tacticians have no chance to reconnoiter or plan in advance. Design the encounter with options that allow you to adjust its difficulty on the fly. Prepare additional creatures that can storm in if the PCs perform shockingly well, or gimmicks to help even the odds if they get crushed too soon. When in doubt, fudge die rolls shamelessly, feigning surprise at the results.

Consider game balance consequences before ruling out certain classes or races. Traps, creatures, and other challenges are balanced under the assumption that the PCs enjoy full access to the various abilities found in the *Player's Handbook*. If you remove certain character classes from the players' reach, the party might suddenly be floored by challenges that ought to be easy. In a world without clerics, undead become much more dangerous. Trivial hit point losses turn deadly when healing spells are hard to come by. A dungeon's physical hazards become more lethal when the characters don't have low-light vision or darkvision.

Players respond better to bribes than to prohibitions. If your concept demands an all-cleric party, allow all races to treat cleric as a favored class. Give the players the option of adding a free level of cleric when creating their characters. (By encouraging them to play multiclass characters, you're also ensuring that the PCs have the necessary abilities supplied by other classes.)

Find ways to reconcile the surface elements of your concept with player preferences. In a campaign without elves, allow your elf-loving player to create a strangely fey-looking human who secretly possesses an elf's standard racial traits.

Customize your campaign not by taking away races or classes, but by adding them. These new additions should heighten your campaign's concept. By adding an exorcist class to your demon-smiting campaign, you make it instantly distinctive—especially for the players who take it.

MODIFIED ALIGNMENTS

Dungeon Masters planning unconventional campaigns might also consider modifications to the alignment system.

Again, dramatic changes to a major rules component are not to be taken lightly. Many spells and magic items depend on the alignment system for their effect. Changes to alignment will disproportionately reduce the effectiveness of paladins and clerics, whose signature abilities depend on it. Beginning players find alignment invaluable as they first learn to add motivation and personality to their characters. Plenty of experienced gamers enjoy the rock-solid certitude of the alignment system and don't want you mucking with it. They've come to vanquish evildoers, and the alignment system allows them to confidently identify enemies in need of smiting.

That said, a group that prefers adventures revolving around intrigue and characterization might want to discard alignment altogether, or make it more fuzzy and subjective, as real-world morality usually seems. Many standard alignment-related spells can short-circuit a typical mystery plot. Television-show detectives would find their work easy if they had an array of *detect evil* spells at their disposal.

You can create a world of subjective morality without completely discarding alignment. In this case, a wielder of alignment magic might be able to detect or target beings and objects that share her beliefs, along with those who oppose them. A user of the same magic with different beliefs might get another set of results entirely.

For most campaigns, changes to alignment will be a simple matter of reinterpretation. As an example, consider a setting in which nobles adhere to a stringent code of personal honor. In this culture, it is not only acceptable but morally necessary to fight and kill people who insult you, provided that you do it within a tightly constrained set of social rules. In such a society, a lawful good person would be one who follows both the spirit and the letter of the honor code. The lawful evil person would fight for his honor, but cheat to defeat his opponents. Chaotic good characters might ignore the rules of conduct and deny the nobility's claim to special status. Alignment might even be a matter of social class: the nobility is lawful, the merchant class neutral, and the working man chaotic.

RACES AS ARCHETYPES

Some DMs running historically based campaigns find the widespread presence of nonhuman races incompatible with the society they're trying to evoke. A group of history buffs might agree and accept the choice to eliminate them.

It is, however, possible to have your cake and eat it, too, doing away with the outward appearance of nonhuman races while retaining much of the mechanical flavor that makes racial types so popular with players.

Convert the races to archetypes. Instead of a separate species, each archetype represents a familiar stereotype from the world of popular fiction. Change physical descriptions so that they fall within human norms. Adapt personality notes to reflect a culturally appropriate stereotype. Ignore Relations, Lands, Language, and all other indications that the character hails from an unfamiliar culture. Keep as many racial traits as you possibly can, justifying any magical-seeming abilities as quirky talents.

For example, the dwarf could become a stout warrior, an ale-swilling laborer with a squat build and a hard-nosed attitude. Explain her resistance to poison as the result of a hardy Constitution. Her darkvision becomes a natural family trait. Her affinity for Craft skills fits her background as a laborer.

Likewise, the elf becomes a lithe, graceful human with a slightly otherworldly air. A friendly witch blessed him when he was young, accounting for his resistance to sleep magic and enchantments. His skill at observation checks simply reflects an unusual awareness of his surroundings.

Convert the other races in a similar fashion. Each will require a slightly different treatment depending on the historical period you want to evoke. The clichés of ancient Egypt differ from those of feudal Japan. Make the connections between archetypes and nonhuman races clear to your players, so they can correctly choose their favorites.

If your alignment system deviates from the norm, or if you're keeping the system but altering the definitions, include this information in the campaign pack you prepare for the players (see the sidebar on page 77). Alignments can be confusing, so make your alterations, and the reasons behind them, as clear as possible.

Alignments usefully telescope complicated issues of behavior and morality into a simple framework for the purpose of a fun adventure game. By widening the telescope or changing its focus, you can make your game memorable—or drive your players crazy with head-twisting philosophical questions. If you spend big chunks of each session dealing with alignment issues, you should probably rethink your approach.

HOUSE RULES OR EXPANDED RULES

Whether introducing house rules of your own creation or expanded rules from another D&D product, always know why you're doing it.

You might wish to add flavor to your world with setting-specific prestige classes, spells, races, or magic items. These modular changes are the safest to make; if you find they're too powerful (or not useful enough), you can always modify them during play.

Other rules changes should be made carefully, for reasons you make clear to the players. Include in your campaign pack a brief justification for each rules change. Distinguish between changes meant to evoke specific details of your world, and those that simply suit your own tastes or desire to tinker with the rules.

For example, you might enliven a pirate campaign by introducing or modifying combat maneuvers to let the characters move more quickly across the terrain, and to reward them for attempting breakneck moves involving swinging ropes, chandeliers, and other hallmark props of the swashbuckling genre. Assuming they want to play pirates at all, your gamers should accept these alterations as part of the special atmosphere of this campaign.

Rules changes meant instead to address your sense of logic or pet peeves with the system might be perfectly justifiable, but you should make your reasons for using them clear. Be leery of changes that decrease the usefulness of a player's favorite abilities, or that favor one race or class over another.

Other players might know the rules at least as well as you, and they might present good arguments against your proposed changes. Hear them out.

As soon as you introduce new rules into your game, you are turning your players into playtesters. Many untested or unfamiliar rules will explode on impact, displaying surprising and unpleasant results when actually used in play. Prepare your players in advance for this posibility. Reserve the right to alter obviously broken rules as you go along. When a new rule has an unexpected result, always fudge in favor of the players. If a character dies because of an ill-considered house rule, revert immediately to the established rules, leaving the PC alive and well. On the other hand, if a character makes out like a bandit thanks to an unbalanced ability skewed in her favor, let the player keep any past benefits from it, but modify the ability or ask her to trade it in for a standard one. Don't take back a PC's gains; instead, think of them as a levy you must pay for the privilege of treating your players as guinea pigs for your rules modifications. (You might have to dispense some compensating goodies to other players as well.)

Some players love tinkering with the rules and will enthusiastically help you test-drive your concepts. Others find it confusing or dislike the retroactive changes to game reality required by playtesting. As the campaign progresses, take periodic stock of the fun the new rules create, measured against the time and focus they take up. If they cost more than they're worth, ditch them.

THE PREGAME

A good game stems from good preparation, and not just on your part. By holding a pregame session to introduce the campaign, you can build unity, cooperation, and thematic cohesion into the adventuring party.

Before the pregame session, convey to the players a basic idea of your campaign and their part in it. If you have a specific campaign concept, lay it out for them in a few words. Inform them of any restrictions or availabilities concerning race or class. Ask them to work up two or three ideas for different characters they might want to play. Send the players a cut-down summary of your campaign pack.

Prepare for the pregame session by dividing your campaign pack into two sections: one providing only the information the players need to generate characters, and another providing general background information on the campaign and the world. Keep the first part short and sweet; it should remind players of your house rules and any constraints (or extra possibilities) they face in creating their PCs.

During the pregame session, introduce the players, enjoy a bit of chit-chat, and then get down to business. Assume that your players have only skimmed what you sent them, or have forgotten it entirely. Repeat the campaign concept as concisely as possible. Provide examples of ways in which the players can tailor their PCs to your campaign. Hand out the character generation sections of your campaign pack.

Choosing Classes

An effective D&D party provides a balance of class specialties. Ask if any players have preferences for particular roles in the party. Here your fight-loving players will put up their hands and ask to play warrior characters,

the specialists will call dibs on their specialties, and so on. In the average group, this will leave about half the players—those without strong preferences—to fill in the missing major classes.

Connecting Characters to Concept

If you're using a party concept, quiz the players to find out how their PCs fit into it. Let's say you're running a game in which the PCs are reformed criminals who now serve as a major city's constabulary. You'd ask each player why the PC became a criminal and how the NPC police captain inspired him to reform.

Building Party Loyalty

With or without a party concept, you might find it useful to build connections between the PCs into their past histories. Ask the players to briefly describe their character concepts. Suggest to them that because their characters aren't fully fleshed out yet, they should be open to incorporating ideas from other players into their own characters' personal histories. Then ask each player to explain his or her character's loyalty to at least two of the other PCs. Guide the choices so that every PC has a connection to at least two others.

Provide examples if the players seem stumped:

- "My character is Berenice's brother. Although she is older, he's always tried to protect her."
- "I owe her character my life; she saved me from a pack of ravening ogres."
- "His cleric converted my character to his faith; he's been my spiritual advisor ever since."
- "He's been my best friend for years. He's the only one who knows about my family curse."

Character Generation

Now that the players have worked out connections between their characters and your world or story arc, and between each other, they can complete their game statistics. Having given this some thought already, they should have a head start and be able to complete their characters in an hour or two.

This time might seem boring to you, but the players are involved in an engrossing activity and will be having fun. Take advantage of their work time to do additional preparation of your own.

Incorporating Player Input

While the players roll up their characters, you can think about ways to incorporate the newly invented character backgrounds into your game.

Just as the players made the story more interesting by creating established relationships with each other, you can scan your NPC roster and find likely connections between them and the PCs. Try to find at least one NPC suitable for providing support and advice to each PC. If none of your prepared NPCs fit the bill, invent new ones. You might invent a bartender character who is a former pickpocket; he could serve as a mentor to a PC rogue. The party wizard might be on speaking terms with the crusty master of the university library, and so on. Not every connection need be benign; you might decide that your shadowy villain is also the mysterious figure who slew the paladin's father, for example. Reserve the nastier associations for story and drama fans, who are more likely to enjoy them.

The same sorts of players are likely to provide you with plot ideas in the form of character background. Consider how you might adapt your planned storyline to incorporate them. For example, if a player creates an amnesiac PC, that detail demands action from you. Let's say your adventure involves a search for a missing wizard. You might decide that she can, when found, provide a clue to the PC's identity.

Players less interested in narrative can also help customize your game. Tell the players that you're willing to entertain distinctive mechanical features, such as new spells for spellcasters, new magic items or feats for others, and so on. Instruct them to create features that relate to their characters or to the campaign concept. As with any new rules feature, you should judge their potency carefully before letting them into the game, and be willing to revise their rules on the fly to keep them balanced.

MEDIEVAL SOCIETY

A successful Dungeons & Dragons setting is neither an authentic portrayal of medieval history nor an exercise in logical extrapolation from a fantastic premise. Instead, think of it as a medieval-flavored game environment. Your players expect to play in a world resembling the Middle Ages, but with the harsh, brutal, depressing, and serious elements stripped out. They want to explore an idealized realm of virtuous kings, shining armor, colorful tournaments, towering castles, and fearsome dragons. The setting might have its dark and challenging corners, but overall it offers a positive, escapist vision of good against evil.

Historical accuracy should be ignored when it interferes with the game's spirit of light-hearted fun. For example, out of respect for real-world beliefs, D&D includes only imaginary faiths. Few players want to explore a genuine medieval world view, in which issues of faith dominate all thought and culture.

Nor would a strictly realistic economic system provide much entertainment. The cartloads of gold adventurers constantly haul out of dungeons is a fun game element, not a logical one. Had such vast quantities of wealth turned up in the real medieval world, its social structure would have been overturned nearly overnight. Kings and

nobles held power because they were the landowners in an agriculturally based economy. Realistically, they shouldn't be in charge in a D&D world, but they are, because they're integral to the fantasy. Escapism trumps literal logic.

Likewise, your basic D&D world is usually a kitchen sink, using the imagery not only of the Middle Ages but also from ancient cultures across thousands of years of history. Dark Ages barbarians rub shoulders with Japanese samurai and pseudo-Egyptian priests. It mixes the elves and dwarves of epic fantasy fiction with the mighty-thewed warriors of pulp magazine sword and sorcery.

If you were writing a novel, you wouldn't want to invent a world that was merely a collection of popular clichés about the medieval and ancient periods. You would want to either evoke one particular period in a fresh and surprising way, or create an exotic place and time entirely from scratch. In a game, though, clichés are useful. They act as a kind of shorthand, making it easier for you to describe your setting in a few simple phrases and images. Your players already like and understand them. Don't let a misplaced sense of literary snobbery get in the way of a good time.

You can import many of the details of your world straight from Hollywood depictions, fantasy novels, and video games. Other reliable elements of a fun, medieval-flavored world appear below.

Finally, in Chapter 4, we take this information and put it to use, describing a complete D&D town for you to use in your campaign.

Warning: The information presented here consists almost entirely of generalizations and oversimplifications to help you create a fun, accessible D&D world. Try any of this on your medieval history professor, and she'll flunk you faster than you can say Constantinople.

BURIED GLORIES, RECENT DANGERS

In a standard medieval-flavored setting, civilization has slowly rebuilt itself after a period of chaos and catastrophe. Various ancient cultures have already risen, prospered, waned, and vanished from the earth. A great empire once controlled most of the known world, but over a period of centuries, overextended itself, lost its original fervor for conquest, and was finally overrun by barbarian hordes. The barbarians emulated the rulers of the empire, adopting the habits of civilization—only to be destroyed in turn by younger, hungrier barbarian tribes. Provinces split apart; besieged cities crumbled and fell. Warlords ruled successively smaller chunks of territory.

The ruins of those ancient days litter the landscape, and their treasures lie buried beneath the earth. The culture of the old order has been replaced by a new one, and its science and philosophy have been largely forgotten.

Over the past centuries, the wisest and bravest of the warlords, through valor in wartime and fair administration in times of peace, gradually expanded their lands. Now kings again rule nations, supported by noblemen who control large sections of land on their behalf. Towns have sprung up and grown into cities. Prosperity has returned, but the forces of evil gather on the fringes of civilization, hoping to overrun the realms of good and plunge the world back into ignorance and darkness.

MONARCHS

Perched atop the pyramid of rank in medieval society is a king or queen, a hereditary monarch. Monarchs claim a license to rule granted by the gods themselves. (D&D deities, who are active in the world and communicative with their followers, might well provide visible signs of endorsement to kings who govern according to their divine agendas.)

EQUALITY AND HISTORY

In the Middle Ages, as in most periods of human history, strict conventions governed the roles of men and women. Men fought, governed, ran businesses, created art, and determined religious doctrine. Women enjoyed responsibility and influence only in their own households. A few notable women flouted convention to wield as much influence as men. Examples include the teenaged military leader Joan of Arc; the queen and politician Eleanor of Aquitaine; and the mystic and composer Hildegard of Bingen. They broke the rules, but most women led constrained lives.

The Dungeons & Dragons game treats male and female characters equally. Women are just as capable as men and face no barriers to careers as dungeon raiders. This choice keeps step with modern sensibilities. No gamer should have to play a male PC to have a good time.

A world with full legal and social equality between the sexes would differ significantly from the Middle Ages. The eldest royal heir would ascend to the throne, regardless of gender. Powerful lords would be duchesses as often as dukes. Religious hierarchies could well be integrated.

Some favorite fairy-tale plots go out the window in an egalitarian Middle Ages. Princesses would become accomplished warriors, perfectly capable of rescuing themselves from dragons. Heroes performing great feats would not be rewarded with marriages to fair maidens.

Most players want you to strike a balance between freedom from sexism and historical flavor. Play it by ear, fudge as necessary, and don't look too hard at the contradictions. When a realistic portrayal of historical sexism would annoy or depress your players, tone down the history. When the details of an equal-opportunity world seem too modern or out of step with the medieval atmosphere, revert to history. In general, players dislike having sexist rules applied to themselves but don't mind so much when those rules involve NPCs—provided that any discrimination is presented as a normal element of a stable society, not as brutal or demeaning.

A noble lord surveys his domain

Illus. by E. Fiegenschuh

When challenged by neighboring monarchs, rebellious nobles, rival claimants to the royal bloodline, or outright usurpers, kings must prove their legitimacy on the battlefield. Monarchs personally lead their forces into battle, seeking direct combat with their counterparts among the enemy. Trained from a tender age in the arts of war, they're likely to be high-level fighters, paladins, rangers, or even wizards.

LORDS

Some monarchs might govern through a large and sophisticated royal bureaucracy, but most do so through a system of land grants, serving as overlords to a number of lords, or land-holding nobles. These aristocrats enjoy a hereditary membership in the ruling class, generally descending from families who fought alongside the original warlord or conqueror who brought order to the nation during the dark ages. Some belong to newer bloodlines, having been ennobled by a past or present king in recognition of military victories, political favors, personal friendships, or large infusions of cash to the royal treasury.

Aristocratic titles vary from one kingdom to the next. From highest rank to lowest, with rarely used ranks appearing in parentheses, noble titles include (Archduke,) Duke, Marquess, Earl or Count, Viscount, Baron, (Baronet,) and Knight. Feminine versions of the titles include Duchess, Marchioness, Countess, Viscountess, Baroness, and Dame. Not all aristocrats are lords; some control no lands and instead attend the king as courtiers, who might be trusted advisors or mere social butterflies.

Lords control large areas of land, or fiefs. The revenue of an estate derives from various fees and levies on its tenant farmers. In exchange for their domain, or absolute legal rights over their fiefs, they swear oaths of loyalty, or fealty, to their overlords. One who owes fealty to another is that person's vassal. In a highly lawful nation, the breaking of an oath of fealty is regarded as one of the worst crimes imaginable, as bad as rape or murder. In more cynical realms, vassals revolt against their lords as a commonplace act of political power-mongering.

The size of a fief does not necessarily correspond to a noble's rank. A count might control a huge parcel of productive and strategically important land; a duke

might be stuck with a rocky sliver of gnoll-infested swamp. Because they're inherited, ranks remain fixed over generations, while fiefs change according to the king's ever-changing political needs. The king might punish a vassal who displeases him by partitioning his lands, or reward an ally by adding to his territory at a neighbor's expense. Wise kings change boundaries only after careful deliberation, if at all. Monarchs who do it capriciously provoke revolts. A vassal's fortunes wax and wane with the size and agricultural productivity of his fief. If impoverished by his king, a vassal might suddenly find his oath of fealty less binding.

A lord's home on his estate is usually an impressive affair. If his lands are located in a peaceful, rarely invaded part of the kingdom, he lives in a magnificent but barely fortified manor. If he occupies lands of strategic importance, he lives in a well-fortified castle that functions not only as a home but also as a defensive stronghold in times of invasion. If his castle is sufficiently large and important, he might retain a castellan, an officer responsible for its maintenance and for commanding its defenses during attacks. (The governor of a fort, tower, or other stronghold controlled by the king is also called a castellan.)

Lords might take a direct hand in the administration of their estates. Others allow functionaries to take charge of the details. The official who manages a lord's estate is a bailiff or seneschal. While likely not of noble birth, a bailiff is nonetheless a vassal of his lord. A bailiff's position might have been in his family for generations. He collects rents and taxes and takes responsibility for the upkeep of his lord's buildings and properties. A bailiff commands a staff of men, including fighters and rangers ready to deal with poachers and recalcitrant tenants. He might also be in charge of the affairs in the lord's household, hiring and managing servants, maintaining supplies, and keeping accounts. Lords with large estates and complicated affairs place household responsibilities in the hands of a separate official called a steward.

In most places, lords subdivide large estates, ceding portions to lower-ranking nobles, who become their vassals and pay them a portion of the rents, fees, and fines they collect from their tenants. In others, all fiefs are granted directly from the king to a lord.

Religious institutions can also control fiefs. Land rights belong to a church, temple, or abbey, rather than to an individual lord, but the head of the institution otherwise acts as a landlord, earning rents and fees, and relieving farmers of their surpluses. In the Middle Ages, ecclesiastical landholders weren't required to provide military forces to the king, and monarchs often schemed to curtail the church's growing land holdings. In a D&D world, however, where high-level clerics, paladins, and monks serve ably on the battlefield, ecclesiasts might well be obligated to provide holy warriors to take part in royal wars.

Clerics claim a loyalty outside the system of lords and vassals, placing their deities above their kings. Political tension between church and state inevitably ensues, as clerics claim exemption from royal authority and kings try to bring them to heel. Clerics might resist efforts to enlist them in wars they deem to be unjust or contrary to their faith. The attitude of clerics to royal authority differs by god. Priests of Heironeous and St. Cuthbert enthusiastically supply legions of plate-clad crusaders to smite the enemies of pious kings. The priests and abbesses of pacifistic or chaotic deities march their followers to war less eagerly. Usually, only the lawful faiths are sufficiently organized to maintain large religious institutions, manage estates, or participate in military campaigns. Stewards of religious estates will themselves be high-ranking clerics.

KNIGHTS AND FOOTMEN

In exchange for the rents and levies he collects from his fief, a lord is expected to provide military assistance when the king goes to war.

In some kingdoms, lords must hire, equip, and train forces, and personally take part in military campaigns. A

PLAYER CHARACTERS AS VASSALS

Though few players like to take orders or swear oaths of undying, unbreakable loyalty to authority figures, certain groups might enjoy a campaign in which their characters belong to the household of a powerful lord.

Passive groups who prefer to have their adventures handed to them might enjoy working for a benevolent nobleman. Power accumulators often react like kids in a candy store when their characters are given access to a well-stocked armory of magic items. Allow PCs to use the armory as a lending library, gaining one credit for each item they add to the lord's treasury. If they have contributed six items, they can take six items of similar usefulness on each adventure. (Reusable items can be swapped only for objects of similar efficacy—a potion for a potion of approximately like value, and so on.) Many players will find this well worth the price of taking a few orders from a benign employer.

Much of a vassal campaign unfolds as normal, with the PCs pumping themselves up with frequent trips to the dungeon. Now and then, campaign elements creep in, such as when the characters' lord sends them on political errands or the king calls his forces to war. Aside from their choice of missions, the PCs keep their autonomy to make decisions. Their lord doesn't care how they do something as long as it gets done.

For groups who enjoy drama and history, you can slip in a few uncomfortable realities. The PCs could put down a peasant revolt led by enemy agitators, or experience a crisis when their beloved boss is thrown into the king's dungeons and replaced by a conniving relative.

detailed legal agreement specifies the precise number of men and the equipment they bring with them. In other cases, lords simply pay the king a war levy, and the king's warlords use the money to equip, train, and garrison mercenary fighters. Kings who distrust the good will or competence of their vassals choose the latter. They maintain greater control over the quality and prompt attendance of their forces. More importantly, vassals with fighters at their disposal are tempted to make mischief, attacking one another or fomenting rebellion against the crown. Where nobles enjoy the upper hand, the law allows them to use their armed men for their own purposes when the king does not require their services. Where kings maintain strong central authority, nobles might not use their forces for private warfare.

On the medieval battlefield, the ultimate fighting machine was the armored cavalryman. Well-protected fighters on horseback could control the movement of men on the battlefield, breaking their lines. They were the tanks of their day. Thus, lords devoted much effort to training and supplying these fighters, who were generally low-ranking noblemen called knights.

The first blow against their supremacy fell at the Battle of Agincourt, where, in a precursor to modern artillery warfare, well-trained English archers used longbows to create a devastating rain of arrows, slaughtering a vastly larger force of French knights and footmen. Armored knights went out of style for good after the advent of halfway reliable firearms, which pierced plate mail even when wielded by a moderately skilled shooter.

In a D&D world, knights in cavalry formation might still prove formidable on the battlefield, but magic and exotic creatures take a crucial place alongside them. The forces that lords must supply include not only armored cavalry but also:

- Wizards and sorcerers (to cast *fireballs* and other kinds of artillerylike spells)
- Clerics (to act as warrior-medics, rushing onto the battlefield to heal other high-level knights)
- Rogues and rangers (to act as scouts)
- Tamed or controlled creatures, from dire wolves to golems or even dragons

An unscrupulous advisor tries to influence his weary monarch

Illus. by S. Ellis

Where lords are directly required to provide forces to the king, they maintain troupes of adventurers in their households, bound to them by oaths of fealty. Along with the armored cavalrymen, these elite warriors comprise the lord's retainers. Between military campaigns, lords encourage adventurer-vassals to clear out dungeons, especially if they're unlucky enough to have monster-filled underground complexes on their own fiefs. Through dungeon exploration, adventurer-vassals grow in power, making them more useful to the king and imparting glory and influence to their lords.

In exchange for their service, a lord provides his retainers with meals, clothing, equipment, and an extremely secure home base between adventures. Lords might maintain an inventory of magic items, which the adventurers can trade against or borrow as their missions require. Typically, adventurer-vassals keep magic items they discover until they die or leave the lord's service, at which point ownership reverts to the lord, becoming part of his hereditary estate.

Lords also muster infantry units. Most raise footmen from among the ranks of their farmers, who are handed pikes and ill-fitting armor, and pressed into service. They, too, are vassals of their lords, and their tenancy agreements typically spell out a particular number of weeks per year when they are required to fight for their kingdom. Minor military campaigns typically take place during the down time between planting and harvest—or so the beleaguered farmers fervently pray.

A kingdom surrounded by other civilized lands most commonly engages in low-intensity raiding campaigns, in which one king mounts an incursion into the territory of another, seeking to exact tribute from fiefs and towns. Good-aligned characters might participate in wars of spoils even against those of like faith, provided they follow the

rules of honorable battle, treating noncombatants and surrendering opponents with mercy.

Battles against creature hordes or forces of evil can occur at any time, and such conflicts do not follow the rules of courtly warfare. When a kingdom's survival is at stake, conscripted farmers can be kept on the battlefield for seasons at a time. Lost harvests spell famine, but that's preferable to all-out conquest by orcs, ogres, or other minions of evil.

THE MONARCH'S COURT

Monarchs delegate the details of governance to an official, likely a low-ranking noble but perhaps a well-educated commoner. He might be known as a prime minister, chancellor, or chamberlain. These officials manage a small bureaucracy of royal functionaries. They collect revenues from the king's vassals and taxes from any citizens, such as craftsmen and merchants, who pay directly to the royal treasury. Attentive monarchs make policy and charge their chamberlains with carrying it out. Others rely on their officials to set policy while they go off to war or fritter their time away in frivolous games of the court.

If the monarch has not reached the age of majority, a regent rules in his place. The regent is often a blood relation of the monarch, such as an uncle or cousin. Evil regents might scheme to dispose of their charges and occupy the

RANDOM POLITICS

Use the following table to create a quick political profile for any medieval-style kingdom. Roll randomly only when required to come up with an idea on the spot—for example, when detailing a distant kingdom or a place the PCs merely pass through. If you expect politics to play a large part in your campaign, pick an item from the table, based on your story requirements and the environment your players prefer. Better yet, create your own unique variation.

When rolling randomly, you can skew the result toward a stable, well-run kingdom by adding a negative modifier to the roll. To skew toward evil and misrule, add a positive modifier.

d%	Political Situation
01–17	Wise king maintains the loyalty of landed nobility through his virtue; his policies are enacted by honest and competent officials.
18–24	Virtuous, warlike king maintains the loyalty of landed nobility through the war spoils he brings them; his policies are enacted by honorable and skilled officials.
25–28	Wise regent rules honestly on behalf of an underage monarch; nobles and officials dutifully obey his commands.
29–31	Frivolous monarch blithely approves the policies of a wise chamberlain; nobles are largely fools, like their king, or support the chamberlain.
32–33	Officials rule wisely in place of a mad, senile, or incapacitated king, keeping his condition secret from nobles and commoners.
34–35	Sniveling, villainous king is kept in check by powerful, virtuous lords; officials do their bidding.
36–40	Weak monarch rubber-stamps the decrees of a virtuous noble whose military might he fears.
41–50	Virtuous, warlike king neglects domestic affairs to participate in foreign wars, taking landed nobles with him; an honest regent and officials run the kingdom in his absence.
51–53	Virtuous usurper has seized the throne from a cruel but legitimate king; nobles agitate to seize power from the upstart commoner; newly installed officials execute the usurper's wise policies.
54–56	Decent but ineffective regent rules on behalf of underage monarch; ambitious lords rule their fiefs as powers unto themselves, withholding their debts to the crown.
57–59	Iron-jawed, warlike king maintains the loyalty of landed nobles, who fear his wrath; terrified and efficient officials enforce his will.
60–62	Indecisive king vacillates between the wishes of powerful nobles and intimidating courtiers, satisfying neither; officials indulge in petty corruption.
63–65	Wise king is undermined by scheming nobles; officials split between royalists and schemers.
66–68	Nitwit monarch obeys cruel whims of scheming courtiers; officials struggle in disarray.
69–71	Nobles band together to mount a rebellion against a cruel and ineffective king; civil war looms.
72–74	King is held hostage by a hostile neighbor; central authority has broken down as nobles rule their own fiefs, withholding from the crown fees and taxes that might be used for ransom.
75–77	Once-virtuous monarch, rumored to be ensorcelled, is kept in seclusion by corrupt courtiers; officials do their evil bidding.
78–80	Frivolous monarch blithely approves the policies of a corrupt chamberlain; nobles are largely fools, like their king, or are in the chamberlain's pocket.
81–83	Weak monarch rubber-stamps the decrees of a cruel noble whose military might he fears.
84–86	Corrupt regent enriches himself while waiting for the monarch to come of age, stripping honest lords of their lands and awarding fiefs to his cronies.
87–89	Virtuous, warlike king neglects domestic affairs to participate in foreign wars, taking landed nobles with him; a corrupt regent and officials loot the kingdom in his absence.
90–92	Once-virtuous monarch has become cruel; terrified nobles and officials execute his evil commands.
93–95	Frivolous but lethally clever king keeps his nobles at court, where he capriciously punishes those who displease him; corrupt officials enrich themselves on the side while overtaxing his vassals and wretched subjects.
96–100	Corrupt usurper has taken the throne and smashed the nobility; his cronies and bodyguards cruelly execute his policies.

throne themselves. They might spend their time as rulers enriching their own coffers, or they might rule selflessly for the good of the king and the people. Some continue to perform their administrative duties after the monarch comes of age, taking the title of chamberlain.

Regents also rule when a monarch is absent. A warrior king who goes off to do battle against the forces of evil might leave a sibling or other close relative to warm his throne. If villains capture a traveling king and hold him for ransom, the regent takes over at home. Depending on his honesty, a regent might drag his heels in paying the ransom—or he might even have schemed to engineer the capture in the first place.

Most monarchs surround themselves with nobles of their realm. Landless nobles attend the king as full-time courtiers. Some kings tether powerful landed nobles to them by insisting on their regular attendance at court. This gesture reinforces loyalty, or at least keeps rebellious dukes and counts under a watchful eye. Lords forced to spend long periods at court can manage their domains only from a distance and place great trust in their bailiffs.

Serious kings rely on the wisest of these courtiers for political advice. The most influential courtiers have high Wisdom and Intelligence scores, and several ranks in Diplomacy, Gather Information, Knowledge (geography, history, and nobility and royalty), and Sense Motive skills.

Warlike rulers expect their nobles to train alongside them, becoming great warriors and generals. In such an environment, courtiers gain influence according to their adventurous exploits and will be high-level characters.

More frivolous rulers create a social hothouse atmosphere where wits, flirts, and gossips prosper. The king elevates or demotes officials at a whim, shuffling his temporary favorites in and out of an ever-expanding number of ceremonial positions. Schemes and seductions abound. Ambitious lords must play the king's games or risk losing their fiefs—or their lives. Few courtiers remain on top for long; the most successful among them boast high Charisma scores and have several ranks in Bluff, Gather Information, Intimidate, Knowledge (nobility and royalty), Listen, Perform, and Sense Motive skills.

Typically, a king spends the bulk of his time at a grand palace located in his kingdom's oldest or most prosperous urban center. Wealthy monarchs maintain additional palaces in picturesque or remote spots throughout their realms.

VILLAGES AND VILLEINS

In areas of cleared, relatively flat land, farmers gather together for protection in villages. In woodland or hilly areas, they live in scattered huts near the small plots of land they farm.

Villages in comparatively safe areas of the kingdom form around churches or lordly manors, or along waterways. In areas frequently overrun by invaders, defensive position takes precedence over convenience; villages form on hilltops or around castles and fortresses. When danger threatens, the villagers defend from a hilltop position or retreat behind castle walls.

Farming takes place in open fields and pastures outside the village, to which the farmers travel each day.

Buildings are wattle-and-daub hovels or longhouses, made of timber reinforced on the outside with a layer of air-dried clay applied over a lattice of branches. Another common structure is the sunken hut—a hole dug into the soil, possibly with a wooden floor. It can be used for storage or as housing.

The lord of a village is most likely an absentee knight or, if the landlord is a religious institution, a cleric. Both knight and clerical lord usually descend from noble families. Instead of dealing directly with this minor noble,

VILLAGE ENCOUNTERS

Player characters entering an unfamiliar village should not expect a warm welcome. Fearful of raiders and unaccustomed to dealing with strangers, villagers regard adventuring parties as threats until proven otherwise. A villager approached by adventurers typically avoids conversation, seeking out a reeve, beadle, or priest to do the talking. Once summoned, the authority figure carefully questions the adventurers, hoping to divine their intentions. Farmers are a conservative lot and respond best to eloquent folk of obvious virtue, such as clerics or paladins.

Villages on roads leading to well-known dungeon complexes greet adventurers with greater sophistication, though with no less suspicion. Most residents can tell stories of abuse at the hands of thuggish treasure-seekers. Inns exist only in villages on extremely well-traveled roads. In other villages, locals might be willing to lodge the PCs in their homes once the characters earn the trust of the commoners. This calls for delicate negotiation—peasant hosts want to pocket any fees the adventurers offer them, while village officials try to divert those payments to their lord's treasury (or their own purses).

If the PCs are on friendly terms with a lord, they can procure a letter of safe passage that urges good treatment from villages throughout her fief. The peasants won't be literate, but reeves, bailiffs, and priests can read and will obey their lord's demands in most cases.

Mid- to high-level adventurers face little resistance from ordinary villagers. In fortified villages, they retreat inside castle walls. Most villages are under a knight's protection; that knight and his local peers will eventually attack adventurers who repeatedly raid a village. If they fail, the governing overlord will hire other adventurers to suppress the bandits harassing her serfs. Lords are highly motivated to ward off bandits. A lord who can't keep order in her lands becomes a laughingstock at court. An aggressive king might use the failure as reason to strip her of her fief.

village residents live under the command of a bailiff, who, like them, is a commoner. Other local officials, namely the reeve and his assistant, the beadle, report to the bailiff. These functionaries collect rents, levy fines, and muster able-bodied peasants for battle when war is declared. In particularly enlightened places, peasants might elect a reeve, who serves not only as an authority figure but also as their representative to their lord.

Manorial officials enforce the lord's privileges. A much-resented example is the ban, granting the lord a monopoly over grain milling. He might even claim the village's supply of manure for use as fertilizer.

Most peasants are serfs, also known as villeins. Their right to farm certain parcels of the lord's land carries with it a series of obligations. They are more indentured laborers than slaves, but because they must discharge these obligations, they lack freedom of movement. Their main obligation is the week-work, a set amount of labor they must perform on the lord's lands. A detailed agreement, complete with a schedule, lays out the tasks serfs must perform. The main task of these workers is plowing, but other obligations include tallage—a tax payable to the lord, almost always in produce. Cash is a rare commodity among serfs, which is why many of them eagerly help adventurers, who are known to be free with their gold pieces. Almost any passage in a serf's life is taxable by his lord; for example, a fee called a merchet is levied when a serf marries off his daughter.

Often, serfs enjoy rights to free land cleared by themselves or their ancestors. After fulfilling their week-work obligations, they plow, plant, and harvest their own lands, but even these are usually subject to taxes.

As areas become more technologically and socially advanced, the lords begin to take a more direct hand in the activities of their farmers, pooling their labor to increase production. Serfs become more like employees, following instructions issued by the bailiff, reeve, and beadle, rather than working off their obligations at their own speed.

Disputes between serfs are resolved by the lord at a legal proceeding called a hallmote. For more on medieval justice, see Laws and Punishment on page 101.

TOWNS AND CITIES

Cities exist at ports, on trade routes, and at strategic points that must be fortified against invasion. Most are built on the foundations of older cities from ancient times. Excavations often turn up the rubbish of extinguished civilizations, as well as the occasional treasure or a long-sealed passageway to underground realms.

Medieval cities are considerably smaller than their ancient or modern counterparts. The countryside thrives on agriculture, but cities depend on commerce, which is still slowly recovering from the collapse of the old empires. A thriving center might boast a population of 10,000 residents. The continent's biggest capitals reach, on average, five or six times that number.

Towns and cities owe homage to a lord, usually the king himself, but sometimes a powerful noble. They owe their existence to charters, documents of agreement between city founders and the governing lord. According to the terms of each charter, the lord forfeits close oversight of city affairs in exchange for a general rate of taxation. City-dwellers, called yeomen or freemen, are not vassals of their lord or bound by obligation to work a particular plot of land. Adventurers typically hail from this ambitious class of merchants, tradesmen, and scholars.

A typical city is governed by a lord mayor and a council of aldermen, who oversee a small staff of public officials, including magistrates and tax collectors. The mayor and his council are unelected. In some cities, they simply hand off their posts to chosen successors. Posts in city government change hands either at customary intervals—every two years, for example—or whenever the current occupants wish to retire. In other cities, the mayor and aldermen are selected by the heads of local guilds, professional associations who tightly regulate their members' affairs.

50 RUMORS AND HOOKS

1. A bandit gang preys on wounded and weary adventurers as they straggle down the road from the dungeon to the city.
2. A black cloak was stolen from the Burnt Bridge tavern last night; sewn into the hem is a treasure map.
3. A gigantic egg appeared in the town square last night. No one knows what might hatch out of it, but it's going to happen soon.
4. A deity walks the city streets disguised as a humble mortal.
5. A hot-tempered knight has promised all his lands to his brother if he is bested at the upcoming jousting tournament.
6. A leading churchman has announced a heretical doctrine; his fellow priests have demanded that he recant, on pain of excommunication.
7. A wrestler named Drón Goldentress will perform three great quests for anyone who can beat her in a match.
8. Agitation grows in a neighboring land for a renewed war against the kingdom.
9. An eerie dog with glowing eyes stalks the city at night. The magnificent sorcerer Furioso was bitten by it, and now he can barely remember his own name.
10. Ditchdiggers unearthed an ornate tin casket the other day. They can't figure out how to open it, but won't let anyone else try, either.

11 Drinking a poison surely meant for someone else, the meek baker Oswald dropped dead in a tavern last night.
12 During the day, the headsman's daughter appears rather homely, but under the moonlight, she is the fairest young maiden in the realm.
13 Every hundred years or so, a black, venomous rain falls on the city, killing hundreds of people. A recurrence is months overdue.
14 The Superordinate Six, a band of famed adventurers, have failed to return from an expedition to the Rat City ruins.

The astronomer Harun the Subtle (see #28)

15 Goblins tunneled a good distance under the city walls last year, but the authorities covered it up.
16 Grave robbers have been digging up the bones of slain adventurers. They must be working for a lich or evil wizard.
17 Luriez the horse trader is auctioning off Bravo, a clever and magnificent steed. His former owner, a luckless mercenary, lost him in a dice game.
18 Magic items sold by Antesos Three-Beard have a peculiar way of finding their way back to his shop after the purchasers die.
19 Many of a famous knight's heroic feats were in fact performed by his squire, a young girl dressed as a boy.
20 Mercenaries have taken sanctuary in the temple; the high priests want them out but are forbidden by the tenets of their faith to expel them.
21 Pound for pound, the most valuable treasure in town is not silver or gold, but the cache of saffron hidden in the spice merchant's shop.
22 Priestess Ciana has great healing powers, but those she raises from the dead sometimes take on her personality traits.
23 Pulsing green lights are frequently observed near the abandoned mines south of the city.
24 Recent rains flooded the catacombs beneath the city; strange things are floating to the surface.
25 Someone is stealing all of the town's church bells.
26 Somewhere in the city, the priceless Altar of Kych is hidden in plain sight.
27 The armorer Casabon just received a shipment of Zhenish steel, which will make fine blades for those who can afford them.
28 The astronomer Harun the Subtle reports sighting a circle of new red stars in the sky. The Royal Astrological Society has offered a reward to anyone who can conclusively explain the meaning of this omen.
29 The beloved singer Dulari has fallen prey to a terrible illness, one the healers can't cure.
30 The bullying city watchman Moyalva has been extorting money from the weak and helpless.
31 The courtier Vivando has fallen out of favor with the king, who suspects him of having eyes for the princess.
32 The exiled prince of Cadis unwisely dismissed a churlish servant who knows too much about his master's business.
33 The feathers that rained down on Beggar's Alley last night came from the wings of battling archons.
34 The floorboards beneath the Trembling Pig Inn are hollow and full of stolen gold.
35 Pirates have disrupted grain shipments meant for the kingdom; starvation looms if traders cannot resupply in time.

Illus. by W. O'Connor

36 The high sheriff becomes violently enraged if anyone accuses him of having orc blood.
37 The king is a usurper who has the real heir to the throne chained up in his basement.
38 The king plans to build new watchtowers around the city. Laborers, once desperate for work, will soon be hard to hire.
39 The king's chief minister plans to step down, making way for his clever but abrasive protégé.
40 The philosopher Frabreck has released another pamphlet arguing for the conquest of the orc lands, so that its peoples can be liberated from evil and placed under the king's benevolent rule.
41 The rancher Septimus is raising a flock of strange reptilian beasts on his farm.
42 The retainers of an unpopular knight quelled an uprising on his lands by firing crossbows into an unarmed throng.
43 The rich merchant Zaguant has learned that pirates have sold his son into slavery.
44 The son and daughter of two rival merchant families eloped a few weeks ago. Both fathers offer a reward for the son: his father aims to protect him, but the girl's wants him dead.
45 Whenever a member of the murderous Lampedusa clan is slain, the weapon used to deal the death blow is permanently imbued with powerful magic.
46 The young adventurer Brialda carries a shield bearing the crest of the Acatero family, even though, as an illegitimate daughter of that clan, she is not entitled to it.
47 An ancient throne lies buried in a field nearby. Anyone who sits on the throne for an entire night will rise from it a wise man or a lunatic.
48 They say that if you listen long enough to the water lapping against the shore near the statue of King Brand, you will hear the name of an innocent person you are fated to kill.
49 They're slaughtering more than just cows and sheep at the old abattoir down by the piers.
50 Whenever ravens gather on the clock tower, a mighty hero dies.

PEOPLE AT WORK

Medieval city dwellers have different jobs and responsibilities from their rural counterparts. To keep profits and the marketplace stable, most workers who deal with any sort of industry belong to guilds. Most workers don't have a choice of whether to belong to these guilds, since many businesses and customers will deal only with guild-run shops or laborers.

Most city inhabitants begin their careers as apprentices in their early to mid teens. The workday is long and grueling, just as it is for common folk of the fields, and if a city dweller cannot work, whether due to illness or injury, she is likely to lose her job. Health care, sick days, and vacation are innovations of the modern-day workplace that medieval D&D city dwellers do not enjoy. The following sections detail a number of guild types common to these urban environments.

MERCANTILE GUILDS AND OCCUPATIONS

Chapter 6 details nine different categories of guild, but of those nine guilds, one in particular is more complex than the others. The various mercantile guilds of the D&D worlds are as varied as the number of monsters that lurk in its dungeons. Whereas the other eight guilds are fairly focused in the types of services they provide, mercantile guilds run from the artistic to the pedestrian, from bricklayers to alchemists. Simply put, mercantile guilds are the only ones to encompass the full potential of the Craft and Profession skills. Their members are the workers, providers, merchants, and crafters of the city, and in many cases a city's success or failure hinges on these guilds.

To many city dwellers, the guilds exercise greater power over day-to-day life than any other authority. In most cities, guilds are so powerful that in order for someone to practice an occupation, he must belong to the guild that governs it. Guildsmen jealously guard their privileges, keeping their membership rolls trim so the market for their services will not be flooded. Trades run in families; the son of a guild member in good standing will find it easy to gain membership, where an outsider might be frozen out. Guild rules prevent members from unfairly competing with one another, often in ways that a modern businessman would find outrageously restrictive. For example, in many cities it is forbidden to call out to a customer currently standing at a competitor's stall. Guild rules serve the prosperity and convenience of the proprietors, not the customers.

Any legally permissible occupation practiced in a city has an associated mercantile guild. A guild's influence varies depending on the status and importance of the trade. Trades might be subdivided to a seemingly absurd degree. Tradesmen, professionals, and other active guild members comprise about 10% of a city's population. To determine a random citizen's occupation, first roll on Table 3–1: Guild Member Occupation to determine the general type of work she does. Then go to one of the following nine tables (3–2 through 3–10) to find the character's exact specialty.

These tables can also be used to randomly determine the specialty of a random shop in a city, or the purpose of a merchant's stall or caravan that a combat suddenly breaks into. Little can add more chaos to a battle than crashing through the back of a tent into a chicken butcher's operation!

Table 3–1: Guild Member Occupation

d%	Occupation Type
01–04	Artisan (Table 3–2)
05–10	Construction (Table 3–3)
11–30	Craftsman (Table 3–4)
31–42	Food trade (Table 3–5)
43–67	Garment trade (Table 3–6)
68–80	Labor (Table 3–7)
81–85	Merchant (Table 3–8)
86–90	Profession (Table 3–9)
91–100	Service (Table 3–10)

Each occupation table, under the heading "Pop.," provides an average number of active guild members in the given occupation in a medieval-style city with a population of 10,000. For the artisan, craftsman, food trade, merchant, and profession categories, this number typically refers to the number of places of business, and does not count apprentices, employees, or family members working under a proprietor's roof.

Most of the occupations mentioned on each of these tables are discussed briefly in the text that follows the table. A few occupations have names that are fully descriptive of their roles or functions, such as scabbard maker and fishmonger. In such cases, no further information is given.

Artisan

Jewelers make, repair, and sell jewelry. They cut gems and create settings from silver, gold, or other precious metals. Adventurers seek them out to sell gems and jewels found as treasure, or to convert heavy loads of coin to light, portable gems and jewelry. Jewelers are intimately acquainted with ebbs and flows in the city's wealth—suddenly rich people buy from them, while nobles and burghers weighed down by debt sell. Jewelers won't betray client secrets for free, but they might be persuaded to answer adventurers' questions through bribes or intimidation.

Painters were in low demand in an authentic medieval setting. They created small icons depicting deities and saints, but large-scale images were left to the weavers of tapestries. Portraits of private individuals had gone out of style. Perspective, the use of line and draftsmanship to create an illusion of three-dimensionality, had yet to be introduced. Of course, in a typical D&D world, it's perfectly acceptable to fudge these rules; in a wealthy city, it's not unheard of for painters to be much sought after as methods of preserving an important noble's coronation at court or the foundation of a new temple. As a general rule, the more leisure time and less warfare a city has to contend with, the more in demand artistic painters become.

Sculptors create works of art out of stone, mostly to decorate churches and the homes of the wealthy. Less often, they create freestanding figures or monuments.

Wood carvers add ornament to furnishings and architectural beams. They sculpt holy symbols and religious figurines. Some create images on wood blocks for printing.

Table 3–2: Artisan Specialties

d%	Occupation	Pop.
01–64	Jeweler or goldsmith	21
65–74	Painter (art)	5
75–88	Sculptor	5
89–100	Wood carver	4

Construction

Carpenters make furniture and cabinets. They build the timber frames around which most of a city's buildings are constructed. Adventurers seeking floor plans to recent structures might grease a carpenter's palm.

Masons build the city's most durable and expensive structures, painstakingly mortaring perfectly cut pieces of stone into sturdy walls.

Painters cover a building's wooden or plaster surfaces with paint, decorating them and protecting them from wear. They mix their own paints; specific recipes are zealously guarded guild secrets.

Roofers build roofs, most commonly with straw thatching, which must be repaired frequently. Roofers can also install durable but much more costly clay shingles.

Table 3–3: Construction Specialties

d%	Occupation	Pop.
01–31	Carpenter	19
32–66	Mason	21
67–77	Painter (building)	7
78–89	Plasterer	7
90–100	Roofer	6

Craftsman

Blacksmiths forge common items out of metal, from nails to horseshoes. They repair damaged iron items. A separate guild of arms dealers buys and resells existing armaments. Some blacksmiths are also skilled at crafting weapons and armor, although these laborers are more rare. Most such craftsfolk are employed by nobles or the king directly to manufacture arms and armor for their warriors, and they call themselves armorsmiths or weaponsmiths, not simply the generic "blacksmith."

Coopers make barrels.

Glassblowers make drinking vessels, window panes, and other glass items.

Harness makers specialize in making the various reins required for riding and teamstering. They are looked down upon by their hated rivals, the more skilled saddlers.

Kettle makers are coppersmiths specializing in the manufacture of kettles, pots, and pans.

Locksmiths make and repair locks. They are both expert lockpicks and ingenious creators of nasty traps to prick, slash, and otherwise deter thieves. Locksmiths

manufacture thieves' kits; the honest ones will build kits only for adventurers whose pilfering furthers the cause of good. Less scrupulous locksmiths sell to all comers, and likely also enjoy extensive contacts within the city's criminal population. As such, they are a good source of information and connections, if approached with the necessary subtlety. Even a good-aligned locksmith is a skilled poisoner, enjoying a license from the authorities to keep small quantities of venom for use in his traps. The prevention of theft is, after all, an indisputably virtuous act. The license to possess poison is known as an attorage. Locksmiths face severe penalties, not to mention revocation of their rights of attorage, if caught dispensing poison for use in something other than traps. They might not possess ingested poisons. They acquire their poisons from apothecaries (see page 94).

Potters make ceramic items, from vessels to tiles.

No dungeoneer's supply mission is complete without a stop at the ropemaker's shop.

Rugmakers make rugs, whether simple and unadorned or colorful and elaborately woven. Wealthy people collect expensive rugs and import them from great distances. Well-heeled rugmakers deal in these luxury goods and will purchase artistic carpeting recovered from dungeons, provided that it's still in acceptable condition.

Saddlers are leatherworkers specializing not only in saddles but also often in the creation of leather armor and other intricate garments.

Sailmakers make and cut canvas. In great demand in port cities, they serve the adventurer's market elsewhere by selling tents and, per a special agreement with the ropemakers' guild, their accessories.

Shipbuilders are specialized carpenters who build sailing vessels. Only a few select ports have full-fledged shipbuilding industries. Otherwise, substitute another local industry on that line of Table 3–5. The product should be a high-value export item that can be shipped throughout the known world. Examples might include especially fine rugs, fabrics, or tapestries; a distinctive alcoholic beverage; or some item of fantasy.

Soap makers produce soap, glue, bleach, and lye. They serve as the town's renders, carting away horses and other dead animals to be boiled down into tallow. Their strong smells and raw, ruined skin marks them as outcasts, and their workshops are usually found in the slums or other less than desirable regions of a city.

Tanners, who make leather from the hides of cows and other animals, exhibit a similar reek. Some make simple leather garments. The wealthy and numerous shoemakers' guilds vehemently police the activities of tanners to make sure they don't sneak in some cobbling on the side.

Tinkers repair small household items, from metal pots to damaged saddles. Unlike most tradespeople, they travel from door to door and might work inside the manors of nobles and burghers. Although rarely allowed to stray far from the back entrance, they accumulate much local gossip.

Wagon makers build wagons, carts, wheelbarrows, and similar conveyances.

Wheelwrights make and repair wheels; they act as suppliers to the wagon makers.

Table 3–4: Craftsman Specialties

d%	Occupation	Pop.
01–04	Blacksmith	7
05–11	Cooper	14
12–14	Glassblower	5
15–17	Harness maker	5
18–19	Kettle maker	5
20–22	Locksmith	5
23–30	Potter	15
31–33	Ropemaker	5
34–35	Rugmaker	5
36–40	Saddler	10
41–42	Sailmaker	5
43–48	Scabbard maker	12
49–68	Shipbuilder (or other local specialty)	40
69–74	Soap maker	7
75–80	Tanner	10
81–90	Tinker	30
91–94	Wagon maker	10
95–100	Wheelwright	10

Food Trade

Bakers are the town's breadmakers. Guild regulations prevent them from competing with the pastry makers, and vice versa. As every household in town sends someone to the baker's shop on a daily basis, a bakery is an even better place than a tavern to spread or pick up a neighborhood's freshest gossip.

Beer sellers brew and sell beer for household use. Despite guild rules, hot competition exists between beer sellers; each hawks her own distinct brews. Some specialize in premium ales and sell to the wealthy; others make cheap, honest brews for the common toiler.

Chicken butchers buy, butcher, and sell poultry. They bitterly envy the meat butchers.

Millers operate mills that convert grain into flour. Most mills are situated close to the farms where grain is produced, but local lords typically enjoy a monopoly on milling. Peasants farming free land often prefer to have its grain milled in the city, where the millers undercut the fees charged by landowners. Unknown thugs sometimes sabotage urban mills; most folk assume such criminals have been hired by lords seeking to protect their privileges.

Pastry makers produce pies, mostly meat pies—a staple of the medieval diet. They also make fruit pies and a few simple desserts. A pieman's stall, like a bakery, is an excellent source of local gossip.

Taverners run taverns. For more on taverns, see page 99.

Wine sellers provide wines, offering an even greater variety of high-potency beverages than do beer sellers. They sell out of shops for home use, and they are not to be confused with wandering wine criers hired by pub owners to advertise their wares.

Table 3–5: Food Trade Specialties

d%	Occupation	Pop.
01–09	Baker	12
10–15	Beer seller	7
16–24	Chicken butcher	10
25–32	Fishmonger	8
33–40	Meat butcher	8
41–46	Miller	7
47–62	Pastry maker	21
63–70	Spice merchant	7
71–90	Taverner	26
91–100	Wine seller	11

Garment Trade

Most of the garment trade occupations are self-explanatory and of little interest to the adventurer, so they're not all described below.

The large number of furriers testifies to the popularity of fur garments in a medieval-flavored world.

A mercer is a textile merchant. Most textiles are made in the home and purchased as raw fabric. High-end mercers purvey pricey brocades, silks, and exotic elven fabrics.

Although the standard medieval footwear consists of a flimsy slipper, shoemakers are typically among a city's most prosperous tradesmen.

Adventurers purchasing the standard outfits from the *Player's Handbook* will frequent a tailor's shop. Ordinary folk wear homemade or used clothing; custom-made garments set their wearers apart.

Table 3–6: Garment Trade Specialties

d%	Occupation	Pop.
01–03	Buckle maker	7
04–21	Furrier	43
22–23	Glove merchant	4
24–27	Hat maker	11
28–32	Mercer	14
33–36	Purse maker	9
37–66	Shoemaker	73
67–82	Tailor	39
83–92	Used garment dealer	24
93–100	Weaver	17

Anyone using the Disguise skill to appear as a serf, servant, or other low-ranking person will need to shop at a used garment dealer. Not all her wares will be dodgy, though; fine clothing is an expensive luxury and is often sold to pay off unexpected debts. All but the poorest individuals in a medieval-style world will own more than a few changes of clothing.

Weavers make fabrics. Some specialize in tapestries, large-scale images woven into fabrics and hung as decorations inside the great halls of kings, abbots, nobles, and burghers.

Labor

Bleachers toil in horrible conditions to whiten flour or linens.

Dungsweepers are the lowest of the low in the labor unions. These people clean the city streets of refuse, horse dung, and worse. Cities equipped with sewage systems generally don't have as many dungsweepers (who are usually called sewerers in this case). In cities without underground sewers, their role is critical in keeping a settlement clean and healthy. Still, despite the important role the dungsweeper serves, his lot is a lonely one.

Petty laborers fan out through the city in search of odd jobs and other menial work. They must refuse tasks over which other guilds enjoy exclusive rights, ruling out most of the obvious jobs adventurers might assign to them.

The guild of laundresses cleans clothing for households whose members are too busy to wash their own garments but not wealthy enough to afford full-time, in-house servants.

Legally, only members of the messengers' guild might convey messages, written or verbal, from one person to another. Street urchins or laborers who take adventurers' money in exchange for messenger services are at risk of receiving a good beating, sanctioned by law. Guild members undertake a solemn oath to protect client confidentiality.

Porters carry goods and other heavy items on foot. They are forbidden to carry water; this is the bailiwick of another guild: the aptly named water carriers. Teamsters drive carts and carriages. They haul items from one place to another and load and unload the materials beside their vehicles, but they won't carry any goods one step farther. That's a porter's job.

Table 3–7: Labor Specialties

d%	Occupation	Pop.
01–04	Bleacher	5
05–14	Dungsweeper	32
15–35	Laborer	40
36–42	Laundress	9
43–71	Maidservant	40
72–77	Messenger	8
78–85	Porter	8
86–91	Teamster	8
92–100	Water carrier	12

Merchant

For general information on shops and sellers of goods, see Shops on page 99.

Dealers in antiquities and curios are common in cities frequented by adventurers and other treasure-seekers. They buy and sell figurines, statues, paintings, furniture, architectural decorations, and other sundry items of value. They purchase primarily from adventurers and sell to wealthy collectors of interesting or mysterious bric-a-brac. In some cities, curios dealers are forbidden to traffic in items under the control of another guild. For example, they might be permitted to resell gems and jewels only to members of the jewelers' guild, and not to the public. Antiquities dealers are sources of invaluable information—it is to their advantage to steer their vendors toward the most promisingly lucrative new looting sites.

A chandler is a general provisioner from whom adventurers can purchase miscellaneous items not covered by the charters of other guilds. Many sell mostly soap, bleach, paint, candles, and other household supplies. Others specialize in odd items favored by adventures, from caltrops to whistles.

Cutlers sell knives, spoons, and other items of cutlery.

Hay merchants sell hay and other feed for horses. In a town where many people own exotic mounts, they sell feed for those creatures as well.

Oil merchants sell cooking oil and fuel for lamps and lanterns.

Dealers in weapons and armor do not make their wares; they buy and sell used equipment. The typical adventurer spends much of his early career trading up at his local weapon dealer. These merchants know the new adventurers in town, though they take care never to burn a regular customer with indiscreet chatter. They might take finder's fees to connect patrons to adventurers and vice versa. They can also help parties recruit new members. Some might even form syndicates, perhaps in concert with antiquities dealers or other merchants who resell dungeon loot, to equip, sponsor, and direct adventuring parties of their own.

Wood sellers provide fuel for fires and furnaces.

Table 3–8: Merchant Specialties

d%	Occupation	Pop.
01–09	Antiquities or curios dealer	5
10–35	Chandler	14
36–43	Cutler	4
44–51	Hay merchant	4
52–59	Horse trader	4
60–75	Oil merchant	9
76–91	Weapon or armor dealer	9
92–100	Wood seller	4

Profession

Advocates assist defendants in criminal trials. In kingdoms with well-codified legal systems, they're legal experts, capable of reciting chapter and verse from the relevant law code. Where kings and lords rule by fiat, advocates are popular minor nobles who trade on their personal relationships with relevant authorities. The former type must be aggressive and picky; the latter, friendly and comforting. Player characters hiring advocates to defend them should be sure to pick the right personality type for the legal system at hand.

Apothecaries are medieval pharmacists; they supply drugs, draughts, and medicinal potions, as well as the ingredients to make such things. They provide advice on the proper use of medicines without encroaching on the rights of the physics' guild. Like locksmiths, a few of the city's most trusted, well-established apothecaries have rights of attorage (a license from the authorities to keep poisons on their premises). Town councils and local lords alike might grant attorage permits to adventurers to buy and use poisons. These licenses typically cost 50 gp per year. Without them, possession of any poison is a serious crime punishable by heavy fines, exile, or death. Most jurisdictions completely forbid the formulation, sale, or use of ingested poisons, which most often figure in surreptitious murder.

Cartographers, who make copies of maps, exist in cities where adventurers ply their trade. They are not surveyors or explorers but skilled, specialized scribes who can turn a party mapper's rough scrawls of a dungeon layout into beautiful illuminated art. The accuracy of their maps is based solely on the original works. When a map is a copy of a copy of a copy, additional inaccuracies creep in over time, no matter how careful the copyist. A reputation for discretion is essential to the cartographer's trade. Adventurers zealously guard the security of their maps and have been known to express violent displeasure when a copyist leaks details or, worse, makes copies for sale to others. Cartographers safeguard their premises and riddle their shops with traps to discourage thieves from helping themselves to the treasure maps under their care.

Physics or chirurgeons diagnose illnesses, prescribe drugs, and perform surgery. Many are low-level clerics. Some cater only to wealthy clients, while others provide their healing gifts to all who need them, including disreputable adventurers.

In a world without printing presses, scribes make books and documents. They can copy simple documents in a basic, readable script, or create gorgeous illuminated manuscripts in a decorative calligraphic style, complete with vivid images highlighted in gold, silver, or magic paint. Scribes might be present to make records at official

proceedings, such as important trials. They also create pamphlets, notices, and wanted posters.

Table 3–9: Profession Specialties

d%	Occupation	Pop.
01–15	Advocate	6
16–35	Apothecary	5
36–47	Cartographer	2
48–77	Physic/chirurgeon	15
78–100	Scribe	5

Service

Barbers cut hair, provide shaves, and otherwise attend to the personal grooming of their clients. Some also provide first aid and medical advice, or even perform surgery, to the acute displeasure of the physics' guild. Those who can afford good medical treatment do not seek it from a hair-cutter. Barbers often become confidants to their clients, but they rarely spill secrets to adventurers—unless the price for talking greatly exceeds the potential loss of business.

In a truly medieval-flavored world, a bath is a rare event in any citizen's life, occurring once or twice a year even for the wealthiest and most fashion-conscious. Those who wish to make the most of a special occasion go to a public bath, where they receive a thorough scrubbing from a member of the bathers' guild.

Brokers are middlemen who assist their clients in hiring labor and services. They mostly serve the adventurer's market by quickly and efficiently rounding up hirelings and freelancers. They charge their clients a fee equal to 10–20% of a month's wages for any hirelings they employ, or 5% of the fee paid for a one-time service. Guild rules keep these arrangements flexible, and brokers alter their terms when reasonable.

Innkeepers run inns; their guild keeps competition within bounds. For more details, see Establishments on page 98.

Money changers exchange foreign coins for local currency and large denominations for small (and vice versa). For game purposes, a gold piece is a gold piece, but in a medieval-style world, each kingdom mints its own distinctive coinage, usually with a picture of the current monarch emblazoned on one side. Merchants in most kingdoms accept only local coins, so adventurers who cross borders must exchange their money from one currency into another. In most instances, this dull activity can be assumed to happen between sessions. However, money changers can also serve as fonts of information, as they're the first to know when a new band of adventurers comes lumbering into town weighed down by sacks of foreign or ancient coin.

Stablers run livery operations where travelers can leave their mounts to be groomed, fed, and sheltered.

Table 3–10: Service Specialties

d%	Occupation	Pop.
01–34	Barber	30
35–40	Bather	5
41–48	Broker	2
49–60	Innkeeper	5
61–65	Money changer	2
66–100	Stabler	5

Nonmercantile Guilds

Mercantile guilds aren't the only guilds that operate in towns and cities—they're merely the most prolific. Other guilds can often be found in settlements, although not in anywhere near the numbers of the mercantile guilds. In fact, it's not uncommon for a town or city to be missing representation by these other guilds, but as a city grows larger, it becomes increasingly more likely that members of these other guilds are present.

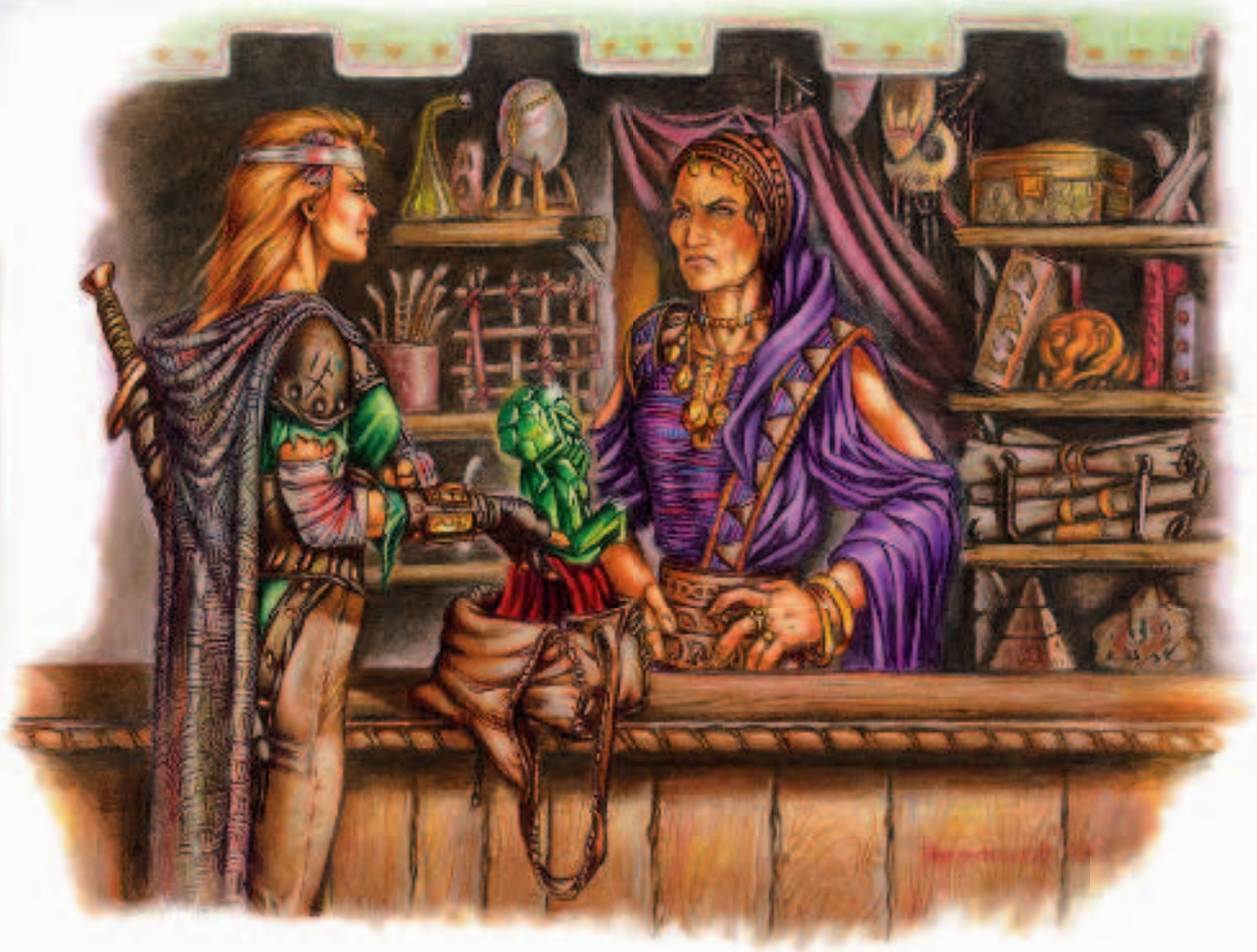
Table 3–11: Nonmercantile Guild Professions

d%	Occupation	Pop.
01–04	Alchemist	10
05–16	Clerk	40
17–30	Criminal	82
31–34	Elected official	10
35–42	Entertainer	45
43–60	Guard	40
61–63	Magical artisan	3
64–66	Magical tutor	9
67–74	Mirabicary	6
75–82	Priest	20
83–92	Professor/tutor/sage	5
93–100	Sellspell	5

Members of the alchemists' guild—usually, wizards who have retired from active adventuring—are licensed to sell alchemical items, spell components, and other supplies for spellcasters. They sell alchemist's lab equipment and other objects required for magical research. Some also deal in scrolls, wizards' books, and occult tomes. Alchemist's establishments see plenty of magical shop talk; any spellcaster wishing to make contact with colleagues in town can quickly do so by getting acquainted with the proprietors. Characters can use the Craft (alchemy) skill without belonging to the guild, which concerns itself only with vendors of occult supplies.

Clerks are similar to scribes, in that one of their primary functions is to record dictation from government meetings. They also organize and catalog government files and papers, and manage the day-to-day bureaucracy of a city's political figures.

All cities and towns have criminals, but relatively few of them could be considered career criminals. This category does not count the idle pickpocket, the woman who steals bread out of desperation to feed her family, or the depraved lunatic who kills to satiate the quarrelsome voices in his head. These are people who have turned to crime as a way of life, as a method to put food on the



Illus. by R. Spencer

This shopkeeper isn't overly impressed by the treasure an adventurer wants to sell

table and to fund their excesses. These criminals don't have any other job, and are often members of thieves's guilds, assassins' guilds, and the like. Almost all career criminals have a cover job; when you roll up a criminal, you should roll again to determine what profession he operates under on a day-to-day basis.

Elected officials are those chosen by the community for a role in a city's leadership. This category also includes those who come into the role of leadership through other means, such as by hereditary inheritance.

Entertainers cover a wide range of talents, from singers to musicians, from carnies to ballet dancers.

Many households and businesses retain armed guards for protection. The members of a guards' guild, though, are freelancers—typically 1st- or 2nd-level fighters or warriors—who hire on for short-term assignments. Clients looking for defenders against tough opponents must go further afield than the guild and hire experienced adventurers. Guard guilds are much larger in lawless towns, where organized bandit bands frequently assault businesses.

Magical artisans are divine, arcane, or psionic talents who use their magic to create works of art or magic items. They generally don't sell to the public, but work off consignment through a mirabicary or some similar merchant.

Magical tutors are divine, arcane, or psionic talents who spend their time teaching students the ways of magic. Some tutor only one or two students at a time, while others are professors at magic schools who teach entire classes of hopeful wizards, priests, or psions.

Favorite shopkeepers of adventurers everywhere, mirabicaries buy, sell, and trade magic items. Most are wizards or rogues of surprisingly high level. Their well-guarded shops boast an array of exquisitely hidden traps and mighty reinforcements. A mirabicaries' guild relentlessly pursues anyone who tries to rob a member. It's an easy matter for the typical guild to field a band of adventurers eager to hunt down and destroy any would-be bandits. Mirabicaries know all of a town's most formidable dungeon-delvers and have magic items on hand to generously reward them for their services. They maintain close ties to local authorities and can have a writ of outlawry (see page 103) drawn up at a moment's notice.

Priests are almost always clerics, but can sometimes be druids, paladins, rangers, or any other divine spellcaster.

These are members of an established religion who lead prayer rituals for the citizens, offer their services and spells to the faithful, and generally work to better the teachings of their chosen deity to any who will listen.

Cities are hubs of scholarship; many house relatively new institutions of learning known as universities. Scholars who teach at universities but also freelance as researchers and purveyors of information belong to the professors' guild. Sages are independent scholars, often those whose learning derives from experience and direct observation; they fund their pursuits by advising adventurers and others in need of esoteric lore. Tutors are general educators mostly hired by wealthy households to teach young children. Many religious institutions also provide a general education to young men and women, either in exchange for donations or as training for novice clerics.

Sellspells (the term is a variation on sellsword, a name given to mercenaries) are spellcasters who work magic for a price, often for commercial purposes. Typically low-level wizards, sorcerers, and clerics, sellspells usually serve useful but mundane ends. *Disguise self* is popular at festival times with rich clients who wish to assume an exotic or alluring new form at a party. *Lullaby* cures insomnia. *Silent image* augments commercial signs with arresting illusory images. Other commonly requested spells for hire include *comprehend languages, detect magic, detect poison, identify, mending, purify food and drink,* and *speak with animals*. Clerics who work as sellspells generally hand over their fees to the common treasuries of the churches and temples where they live and work. They won't perform magic in furtherance of any cause that conflicts with their church's doctrine. Most of their secular colleagues also avoid casting spells for evil purposes, as the majority of sellspells desire to be perceived as honest businessmen. Many sellspells retired from active adventuring after a taste of its dangers, and are sensitive to slights from those who question their retreat to a safe and comfortable life. They are extremely reluctant to travel outside the city limits, much less place themselves in physical danger, to cast their spells.

OTHER CITY DWELLERS

Adventurers interact in any significant way with only about 20% of a city's population. The rest are children, the elderly, the infirm, household servants, hirelings, and other background characters. As already mentioned, half of the active characters in a city will be guild members. The remaining 10% fall into the following categories.

Landed noble families often maintain manors in town. They take part in their own social affairs, but are usually forbidden by the terms of a city's charter from taking part in its government. If a king maintains a court in the city, nobles can get all the politics they can handle there. Otherwise, they're content to enjoy the diversions of the city, while at the same time remaining above it. The young bravos of noble families are notorious trouble-seekers, always on the lookout for an excuse to draw their swords. In the university district, armed noble sons and daughters might become an anarchic law unto themselves; ordinary citizens fear student riots.

Mercantile guild members are small businessmen, but the titans of medieval-style commerce are the burghers, traders, and bankers who move goods on a nationwide or international scale. They run shipping concerns, import goods from far away, and maintain large warehouses. Burghers supply guild merchants with the items they sell. Unlike their social betters, the nobles, successful burghers have plenty of cash. One merchant house might employ dozens or even hundreds of workers as bookkeepers, teamsters, guards, and porters. They occupy grandiose mansions, employ large household staffs, and display their wealth openly. Still, even the shabbiest noble secretly looks down his nose at members of the merchant class, a prejudice most burghers feel acutely.

As the importance of trade grows, many burghers seek political influence in keeping with their newfound wealth. Some gain prominence by marrying into relatively impoverished noble families, especially those without lands to profit from. Others squeeze money-hungry nobles by lending them sums they cannot repay. In some countries, the king himself might be up to his neck in debt to the merchant class, having taken out gigantic loans to fund his wars. Burghers must be careful not to take this too far; unjust kings can wipe out these debts at the stroke of a pen. But no king or noble wants to risk killing off trade altogether or souring other burghers' desire to lend to them.

With large coffers of cash at their disposal, burghers serve as excellent patrons for adventuring parties. They bankroll dungeon expeditions and are fervent collectors, paying handsomely for antiquities and other art objects. They might hire adventurers to rescue kidnapped relatives, clear trade routes of bandits, or explore distant lands in search of new markets or products.

Many people join the clergy in a medieval-style setting. Inheritance laws provide for only the first son (or, in an egalitarian setting, daughter) to take over an estate or business empire when a noble or burgher dies. Many younger siblings are therefore put in the care of the church. Ambitious ones rise in a clerical hierarchy as priests. More humble types join brotherhoods or nunneries. They might be cloistered, meaning that they spend their days in an abbey far from civilization, engaged in scholarship, craft production, and contemplation. Cloistered clergy are rarely encountered in the city. More worldly brothers and nuns can be found in urban environments, providing for the poor or performing other everyday acts of devotion

favored by their deities. Worldly deities encourage their priests to exercise political power; their priests can be found at court, petitioning lords to obey their godly commands. Many estates belong to religious institutions and require clerical functionaries to conduct business in town, selling their produce and banking the proceeds. Aside from a few unobtrusive holy symbols, some priests are indistinguishable from a town's more prosperous burghers. They might hire adventurers to recover lost holy relics, rescue captured clergy, take righteous vengeance against the followers of evil deities, or accompany missionaries into hostile territory.

Large cities, especially those where order has broken down, accumulate a class of the indigent—destitute people with no real means of support. Many have left surrounding fiefs after hardships or conflicts with relatives or the local lords. They might be refugees forced to flee their homelands by war or other disasters. Medieval cities offer little hope for the impoverished, except as recipients of charity. The guild system prevents them from competing with existing workers in nearly any category, so most live in despair and squalor. The most aggressive form criminal gangs, preying primarily on those around them, but also on adventurers and others who stray toward the cheap side of town.

ESTABLISHMENTS

The following locations will commonly find their way to the top of a list of places PCs want to visit. Most fulfill basic functions—a place to eat or sleep—but double as excellent resources for information or contacts.

INNS

Actual inns of the Middle Ages were primitive—primarily, large halls offering bedding and floor space in a large common area. Few people traveled, and wandering traders and players often preferred to set up a wagon camp outside town. However, in a world where adventurers often come stumbling into town laden with coins, inns offer this class of well-heeled vagabonds greater privacy and comfort. The typical inn includes a small common room where ale and simple breakfasts are provided to guests at set times. Inns are run by a family, perhaps augmented by a few chambermaids. Sometimes converted from large manor halls, they maintain a dozen or so rooms on two or three floors. Those catering to adventurers might offer vaults or lockboxes for the storage of treasure, trapped locks for the doors, and perhaps even magical alarm measures to alert guests to the approach of brigands or enemies.

EATING HALLS

The restaurant, in which customers sit down at separate tables and order custom-cooked meals from a menu, is a postmedieval invention. In a medieval-style world, adventurers sup at eating halls: large, barnlike establishments where they rub elbows with fellow customers while seated together on long benches at gigantic tables. Everyone eats the same meal. It might change from day to day, but more likely, an eating hall serves only one signature dish, such as mutton or beef. Diners pay a flat fee and generally eat food and quaff ale until they can barely move.

A meat dish is the main attraction, but grain dishes, from breads to porridges, make up the bulk of most meals. Root vegetables, such as beets, carrots, turnips, and parsnips, are served most of the year. Green vegetables include asparagus, cabbage, and spinach. Certain foods are eaten only by the lowly; in most places, a willingness to consume onions is a sign of a peasant upbringing.

Newcomers in a neighborhood eating hall attract notice. The type of attention drawn depends on the local attitude toward strangers.

Diners are talkative, shouting and laughing throughout the meal. The quality of the gossip varies according to

INN AND TAVERN NAMES

Inns and taverns and Dungeons & Dragons seem as inexorably intertwined as roots in the earth. Campaigns can (and often do) begin in in these locations, and they're usually some of the first places PCs seek out when visiting a new city. The NPC owners of the world's inns and taverns realize this and try to give their establishments catchy and memorable names.

If you're in a bind and the PCs have come to a town you only sketched out a few minutes earlier, you can use the following table to generate memorable names for inns and taverns. Simply roll d20 twice, once for an adjective and once for a noun, and presto—instant tavern name.

d20	Adjective	Noun	d20	Adjective	Noun	d20	Adjective	Noun
1	Black	Dog	8	Wet	Elf	15	Hungry	Thug
2	Green	Horse	9	Drunken	Gnome	16	Thirsty	Pirate
3	Red	Rat	10	Tipsy	Dwarf	17	Sleeping	Priest
4	Golden	Fish	11	Welcome	Orc	18	Twisted	Boot
5	White	Giant	12	Scurvy	Halfling	19	Spinning	Bucket
6	Blue	Dragon	13	Rusty	Fool	20	Dancing	Tankard
7	Dripping	Vampire	14	Dizzy	Wench			

the nature of the clientele. Members of certain guilds gather together at particular eating halls, so it might be possible for the adventurers to acquaint themselves with most of a city's sellspell guild, for example, in the course of a single meal.

High-class eating halls generally have more choices on the menu and can sometimes closely resemble modern restaurants. Many such establishments offer exotic fares, such as wyvern steaks, purple worm chowder, or castings of *heroes' feast* spells.

TAVERNS

Taverns range in sophistication according to the wealth of the neighborhood. In poor areas, a tavern is little more than an impromptu party in the home of a brewer. In the richest, they are well-appointed halls that sell dozens of quality wines. Whatever neighborhood they serve, pubs are always located in high-traffic areas—on major intersections, near public squares, and even adjacent to temples.

In most pubs, it's hard to tell whether the drinking is an excuse to gamble, or the gambling is an excuse to drink. Dice games are by far the most popular form of gambling. Gamblers caught with shaved or trick dice will be thrashed by enraged customers. Many taverns employ low-level spellcasters to ensure that dice have not been tainted by magic.

Real medieval taverns were hotbeds of prostitution. If you prefer an idealized setting, you might want to omit history's seedier details.

SHOPS

A shopkeeper's store is also his home. Business is most often conducted from a stall on the street in front of the building. Craftsmen act as their own billboards, working outside to attract the attention of passersby. Shutters separate one storekeeper's wares from those of his neighbor. A storekeeper who maintains a large inventory usually leaves his customer to wait on the street while he heads into his shop to locate a requested item and bring it back out for inspection. This arrangement cuts down on armed robbery, since would-be thieves must linger in the full scrutiny of a busy commercial area. Shopkeepers might compete for customers, but they band together to discourage robbery.

100 INSTANT NPC AGENDAS

When running campaign encounters, especially in a town or city environment, count on players to surprise you by seeking out encounters with walk-on NPCs you haven't detailed. Whether their characters want to speak to merchants, burghers, servants, or criminals, this list of instant personalities and agendas is perfect for surprise NPCs.

Don't bother to create an interesting character for every single encounter. Many scenes are best left short and sweet, allowing you to move on to an entertaining scene that relates to the main adventure. Every so often, you should throw in a memorable character whose agenda has nothing to do with the main plot. This creates the illusion that your world is a living, complex place, not a mere backdrop for the adventurers' activities. Often, players remember these improvised characters and come back to them, weaving them into the ongoing story of your campaign.

1 Accusatory: believes the PCs are up to something, and isn't shy about saying so.
2 Apologetic: desperately seeks the PCs' forgiveness for a minor error, real or imagined.
3 Attentive: fixates on one PC, whom he tries to impress at the rest of the party's expense.
4 Authoritarian: sees herself as the PCs' superior and expects their head-nodding respect.
5 Avuncular: feels he's learned life's lessons and is eager to heap advice on any young person who will listen.
6 Battle-ready: seeks advice on an upcoming duel (or other confrontation) with an old enemy.
7 Blinkered: fixes on an idea or course of action and won't abandon it.
8 Boastful: wants the PCs to know how rich, strong, important, famous, or admired she is.
9 Cautious: terrified of making a mistake.
10 Chatty: loves to hear himself talk.
11 Chronicler: an amateur historian seeking information for the book she's writing.
12 Clumsy: keeps dropping things or knocking them over and is too flustered to help the PCs.
13 Conspiratorial: plotting a crime or rebellion and wonders if the PCs are likely recruits.
14 Contrarian: eager to show his independence from conventional wisdom.
15 Cowed: won't do anything that might arouse the wrath of an intimidating superior.
16 Cranky: has dealt with idiots all day and is sure she's looking at another bunch of them.
17 Deluded: convinced he is a grand hero trapped in an ordinary person's body, and wants the PCs to help him recover his real identity.
18 Despises locals: treats outsiders well and locals badly.
19 Drunkard: completely inebriated but does not want anyone to catch on.
20 Easily offended: constantly looking out for insults, which she will imagine if necessary.
21 Efficient: wants to cut to the heart of the matter, resolving it as quickly as possible.
22 Egotistical: wants to be flattered.

23 Embittered: recently lost a legal judgment and wants to complain about it at length.
24 Ensorcelled: a grand hero, trapped in an ordinary person's body, who wants the PCs to help him recover his real identity.
25 Exhausted: tired and simply wants to go home.
26 Fashion-conscious: interested only in who's got the finest clothing.
27 Fatalistic: willing to help the PCs because nothing really matters, anyway.
28 Flirtatious: wants to test his or her charm on a PC of the opposite sex with a high Charisma.
29 Forbidding: takes pleasure in refusing requests.
30 Forgetful: wants to help the party, but must overcome a faulty memory to do so.
31 Giddy: has just received wonderful news and wants the PCs to celebrate his good fortune with him.
32 Glutton: wants the PCs to envy the incredible meal she is about to eat.
33 Gossipy: loves salacious and embarrassing information and happily shares what he knows in exchange for equally juicy rumors.
34 Greedy: knows adventurers are rich and wonders how she can extract the maximum amount of coin from them.
35 Gregarious: wants the PCs to think of him as their new best friend.
36 Grieving: wants to be left alone to mourn a loved one who has just died.
37 Guarded: will do anything to avoid seeming weak or vulnerable.
38 Guilty: has committed a sin or crime unrelated to the plot and is sure the PCs are onto him.
39 Harried: late for an important appointment and wants to get rid of the PCs as quickly as possible.
40 Healthy: swears by a cousin's foul-tasting cure-all elixir, urging the PCs to purchase some.
41 Helpful: eager to please, perhaps to a fault.
42 Hero-worshiping: wants to hear all about the biggest, toughest creature the party ever fought.
43 Homesick: comes from abroad and wants the PCs to agree that her homeland is much better than this place.
44 Idealistic: wishes to enlist the PCs in a pet cause.
45 Impatient: wants to take action right now.
46 Importunate: tries to win a favor from the PCs through blatant begging.
47 Impostor: wants to keep secret the fact that she is a disguised rogue, doppelganger, or other entity posing as the real NPC.
48 Insecure: believes that people think him stupid and wants to prove otherwise.
49 Intimidating: wants others to acknowledge how dreadful and imposing she is.
50 Jaded: has seen and done it all and wants the PCs to know that their problems mean nothing to him.
51 Jester: wants the group to laugh at her terrible jokes.
52 Jolly: gregarious, wants to befriend the PCs and take them home to meet his family.
53 Laconic: tries to use as few words as possible.
54 Lonely: wants the PCs to be her best friends.
55 Loud: very helpful, but speaks in a disconcertingly loud voice.
56 Lovelorn: powerfully infatuated and hopes to enlist the PCs in a quest for his true love's heart.
57 Loyal: respects and admires the PCs' current adversary or object of inquiry and would sooner die than commit an act of betrayal.
58 Machiavellian: tries to involve the PCs in a complicated scheme to gain power or harm an enemy.
59 Matchmaker: always on the lookout for a suitable spouse for a hapless relative.
60 Melancholy: saddened by the state of the world and wants the PCs to share her gloom.
61 Mocking: sees the PCs as absurd and wants them to know it.
62 Mopey: feels that he's an unrecognized genius and wants the PCs to show that they understand him.
63 Nervous: believes that all adventurers are murderous scoundrels and wants to get away from the PCs as soon as she can without offending them.
64 Nihilistic: secretly worships a dark deity of decay and destruction who will be pleased if the NPC brings about the party's ruin.
65 Nosy: wants to know everything there is to know about the PCs, because this is her way of showing friendly interest in others.
66 Oracular: has a premonition about the PCs and wishes to share it.
67 Outlandish: fears he's boring and tries to seem fascinatingly crazy.
68 Pacifistic: aids the PCs only toward peaceful ends.
69 Patriotic: wants everyone to love her king and country as much as she does.
70 Patronizing: views the PCs as common street rabble and condescends to them.
71 Picayune: corrects any minor mistake or mispronunciation the PCs make.
72 Pious: wishes to communicate his great devotion to his deity.
73 Prejudiced: irrationally despises one of the PCs on sight due to race, class, or another superficial trait.
74 Public spirited: loves the area, wants to improve it, and urges the PCs to do the same.
75 Puckish: seeks amusement, preferably at the PCs' expense.
76 Pugnacious: looking for an argument on any topic whatsoever.

77 Quiet: speaks in a barely audible voice and recoils if the PCs don't do the same.
78 Rebellious: wants to enlist the PCs in some trouble-making.
79 Resentful: wants to complain about a stupid or annoying superior.
80 Scattered: wants to help but loses focus unless carefully supervised.
81 Self-obsessed: steers any conversation back to his favorite subject: himself.
82 Servile: considers himself the PCs' inferior and is disquietingly dedicated to aiding them.
83 Shifty: has done something terrible, and the more innocent she tries to appear, the more guilty she seems.
84 Sick: suffers from a chronic malady and anxiously shares details of its symptoms.
85 Skeptical: disbelieves anything remotely questionable the PCs say.
86 Smitten: infatuated with a PC of the opposite sex with a high Charisma, and wants to please him or her.
87 Smug: believes he's clearly the best at what he does.
88 Solemn: responds well to serious talk, but badly to jokes and trivialities.
89 Spiteful: nurses a grudge against the PCs' current adversary or object of inquiry and will say anything that increases their chances of harming him.
90 Territorial: doesn't want the PCs getting too close to her or her possessions.
91 Thick: wants to help but is too dumb to do it.
92 Treasure-seeking: has found a treasure map and wants the PCs to help him recover the loot.
93 Trivial: wishes to demonstrate her mastery of irrelevant minor facts.
94 Trusting: believes anything the PCs tell him.
95 Unreliable: makes outlandish promises that she has no intention of keeping.
96 Vengeful: was recently robbed or assaulted and wants the PCs to thrash the perpetrator.
97 Violent: looking for a scrap against safely inferior opponents.
98 Wagerer: bets on anything.
99 Worried: wants to talk about how badly the kingdom has gone downhill in the past few years.
100 Xenophobic: treats locals well and outsiders badly.

LAWS AND PUNISHMENT

The existence of vastly powerful adventurers is a threat to any ruler's authority. Whenever possible, kings and lords find ways to bring them inside the system, using the same customs of mutual obligation they use to bind all other sectors of society.

Adventurers, who live outside society and are personally powerful enough to settle their own disputes, might at first see little benefit in such an arrangement. When the PCs cause trouble, the law might seem like a nuisance or even the enemy. Without it, however, the cities they depend on for everything from safe lodgings to the convenient exchange of magic items would quickly cease to exist.

The just and reliable rule of law is essential to the prosperity of any nation. People work hard to generate excess wealth only when they believe they will get to keep a fair share of it.

Where the law is applied heavily but unjustly, kings and lords become robber barons, stealing from the people they're supposed to protect. Adventurers are subject to capricious search and detention. The king's men can stop them at any time for a surprise taxation session, confiscating their treasure, their magic items, and even their basic equipment. If the PCs don't fight back, they lose their hard-won property. If they resist, they become outlaws, facing attacks from bounty hunters or law-enforcement officials whenever they venture into populated areas.

In more lawless regions, criminals and brigands run rampant, while farmers flee for the hills and merchants shutter their shops. When traveling, adventurers face constant ambush by bandits. The only difference between these foes and the agents of corrupt authority is that brigands attack first and search for loot later.

Characters familiar with their world understand this instinctively, even if the players do not. If the PCs bristle at authority and shirk any connection or obligation to their comparatively safe, well-governed home base, a quick jaunt to a lawful evil or chaotic land will illustrate the benefits of a just society.

LAW RANK

The degree to which any jurisdiction, whether a fief, city, or kingdom, upholds the rule of law is measured by its law rank. This measures the fairness of its authorities and their effectiveness in suppressing criminality. It's no consolation to have a just, good-hearted king if his sheriffs are too incompetent to enforce his peace.

Answer the following questions to assign a law rank to a locality of your creation. In some cases, the questions require you to make new decisions about your setting, helping you to flesh it out. Start with a law rank of zero, adding and subtracting for each condition that applies. If you prefer to determine some of these factors randomly, tables are provided for that purpose.

Power Center Alignment

What is the alignment of the local power center (see page 138 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*)?

If the power center is good-aligned, add 2 to the law rank.

If it is lawful-aligned, add 3.
If it is evil, subtract 1.
If it is chaotic, subtract 3.

Orderly Transitions

Over the past fifty years, have all transfers of power from one ruler to the next been peaceful?

If so, add 2 to the law rank. Add another 2 points if the history of orderly transitions goes back for a hundred years or more.

For every violent overthrow of a ruler in the last fifty years, subtract 1 from the law rank.

d12	History of Transitions	Rank Adj.
1–3	100+ years of orderly transitions	+3
4–9	50+ years of orderly transitions	+1
10	One violent overthrow	–1
11	Two violent overthrows	–2
12	1d6+2 violent overthrows	–(1d6+2)

Legal Code

Does this place have a written legal code?

If so, add 1 to the law rank. If that code is more than a hundred years old, add another 2.

If not, subtract 3 from the law rank.

d10	Type of Legal Code	Rank Adj.
1–4	Old legal code	+3
5–7	Recent legal code	+1
8–10	No legal code	–3

Strength of Enforcement

How strongly does the ruler enforce the laws?

If enforcement is very strong, nearly always catching or killing criminals, add 2 to the law rank.

If enforcement is moderately strong, catching or killing criminals more often than not, add 1.

If enforcement is weak, leaving crimes unpunished more often than not, subtract 2.

If enforcement is virtually nonexistent, almost never catching or killing criminals, subtract 4.

d12	Strength of Enforcement	Rank Adj.
1–3	Very strong	+2
4–9	Moderately strong	+1
10–11	Weak	–2
12	Virtually nonexistent	–4

Corruption

How many of the ruler's law enforcement officials are ready to ignore crimes or harass innocents in exchange for bribes?

If the region has no corrupt officials, add 1 to the law rank.

If it has few corrupt officials, leave the law rank unchanged.

If more than a third of officials are corrupt, subtract 2.

If more than two-thirds are corrupt, subtract 5.

If you determine this factor randomly, subtract 1 from the roll if the power center is lawful and subtract 1 from the roll if the power center is good.

d12	Level of Corruption	Rank Adj.
2 or less	No corruption	+1
3–9	Hardly any	+0
10–11	One-third of officials corrupt	–2
12	Two-thirds of officials corrupt	–5

Role of Social Standing

In many places, the gap between the social standing or wealth of the accused and that of the victim affects the outcome of cases. Individuals of high wealth and status receive lenient treatment when they offend against their inferiors. Lowly persons, on the other hand, suffer harsh punishments when they commit crimes against the high and mighty.

If these factors have no effect on outcomes, add 3 to the law rank.

If they infrequently have an effect, add 1.

If they usually have an effect, subtract 1.

If they always have an effect, subtract 2.

If you determine this factor randomly, subtract 2 from the roll if the power center is good.

d20	Role of Social Standing	Rank Adj.
1 or less	Never matters	+3
2–5	Infrequently matters	+1
6–10	Usually matters	–1
11–20	Always matters	–2

A positive law rank indicates a jurisdiction with a deserved reputation for justice. Legal cases are mostly decided in favor of the deserving party.

A negative law rank indicates a region where the guilty go free and the innocent hang—or an area with no law at all. When trials occur, they favor the interests of the cruel and corrupt authorities and their cronies and patrons.

If a location's law rank hovers around zero, its legal system is neither overtly corrupt nor particularly reliable.

Before any legal proceeding, roll d20, modified by the location's law rank. (If the party who deserves to win is of high social standing, and if the role of social standing usually affects outcomes, add 2 to the roll. If social standing always matters, add 4 to the roll.)

If the result of the roll is greater than 10, the case will be judged in favor of the deserving party. If not, the case goes against the deserving party. In either event, the result tells you ahead of time what will happen—unless the PCs take successful action to prevent it. To bring about a just verdict in an unjust place, they might bribe judges, convince lying witnesses to tell the truth, or simply free the defendants from the king's dungeons.

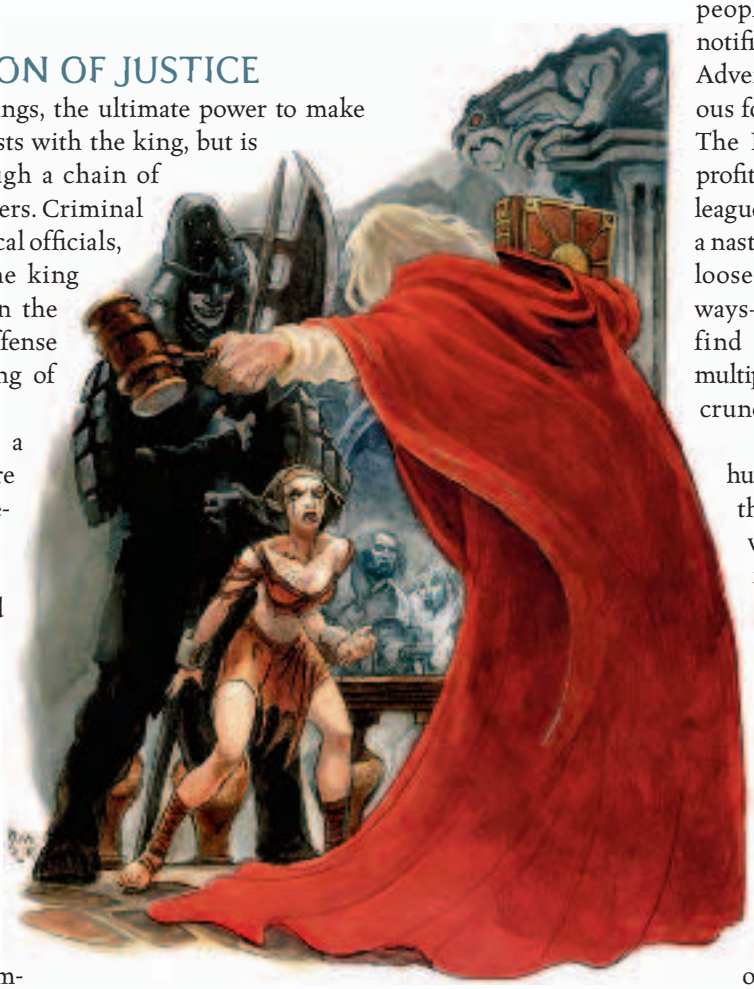
Over time, PC actions could bring about changes in an area's law rank. They might rally a put-upon merchant class, transforming it into a group too powerful for the nobles to ignore. The role of social standing on verdicts might decrease as a result. They could train ineffective guards and deputies, improving law enforcement. The best way to ensure fair legal proceedings is to install a character with a lawful good alignment as the local power center.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

In medieval-style settings, the ultimate power to make and adjudicate laws rests with the king, but is delegated down through a chain of vassals or charter holders. Criminal cases are decided by local officials, lords, overlords, or the king himself, depending on the seriousness of the offense and the social standing of the accused.

The PCs must find a place in society before they can expect any legal rights whatsoever. They might swear an oath of fealty to a lord or king, secure membership in a guild, or become citizens of a city or town.

Few jurisdictions maintain organized police forces. Armed tax officials extract revenue from those who owe it, but no officers dedicate themselves to investigating crimes or arresting criminals. Routine neighborhood patrols are unknown. When crimes occur, the mayor musters a force of armed men to locate and then kill or capture the wrongdoers. Revenue collectors make up the core of these forces, along with a militia of other officials and capable, well-equipped locals. In a rural fief, the lord or his bailiff musters the knights and other armed vassals who owe him debts of service.



In a medieval setting, a court of law wields great power

WRITS OF OUTLAWRY

Local forces might lack the means to defeat high-level adventurers. In most jurisdictions, authorities fight fire with fire, giving other adventurers an incentive to do their dangerous work for them. When accused criminals refuse to be peacefully bound over for trial, the local authority issues a writ of outlawry against them. Notices are posted in taverns, inns, and shops frequented by freelance heroes, identifying the outlaws and providing any known information about their abilities. Anyone capturing or killing outlaws can keep all possessions found on their immediate persons, including magic items. In cities with large adventurer populations, many people pay close attention to notifications of new outlawries. Adventurers are both dangerous foes and lucrative targets. The PCs might find it more profitable to hunt outlawed colleagues than to crawl around in a nasty dungeon scrabbling for loose coins. This works both ways—outlawed PCs might find themselves hunted by multiple gangs of their dungeon-crunching peers.

The law forbids bounty hunters to harm outlaws after they surrender, but otherwise, hunters can use lethal force. Hunters might be held liable for any harm done to innocent parties during an attack on outlaws, if it can be proven that the harm was the predictable result of their reckless actions. Typically, the punishment is a partial or complete forfeiture of any assets seized. Bounty hunters occasionally face criminal charges if prominent people are killed or badly hurt.

When adventurers encounter evildoers committing serious crimes and kill or capture them, they are often granted a retroactive writ of outlawry, gaining all the criminals' possessions as a reward. In locations with law ranks of 10 or more, adventurers with a reputation for heroism can safely assume they will be so rewarded whenever they put down genuine threats to the public order.

TRIAL AND SENTENCE

Party members might find themselves on trial for various crimes, or they can seek redress for offenses committed against them by others. Crimes of violence and against property are both punished harshly. An individual who harms or steals from anyone in the chain of vassalage, from

Illus. by S. Ellis

the lowliest villein to a high-ranking noble, is seen as ultimately injuring the crown. Breaking an oath of fealty is as serious an offense as murder.

In places with a lawful power center, adjudicating officials follow detailed procedures for the presentation of evidence and the testimony of witnesses. If the kingdom has a detailed legal code, they follow it carefully, matching crimes to offenses and meting out appropriate sentences. Advocates can appear on behalf of the complainant and the defendant, arguing the meaning of the kingdom's laws to benefit their clients. Some codes call for trial by jury; in others, the official in charge is the sole arbiter of guilt or innocence.

Areas dominated by chaos often favor the ordeal as a method of adjudication.

- In an ordeal by fire, defendants are thrown onto a burning pyre, forced to walk over coals, or forced to press heated metal objects against their unprotected flesh. Those who survive unharmed are declared innocent, having clearly been blessed by the gods.
- In an ordeal by water, defendants are placed at risk of drowning, thrown into a deep lake or a fast-running river.
- Trial by combat pits the defendant, or a chosen champion, against a warrior chosen by the complainant or the state. If the defendant fights and loses, she is slain, her guilt proven by the deities' failure to intervene on her behalf. If the defendant's champion loses, the defendant is judged guilty and sentenced accordingly. Victory by the defendant or her champion conclusively demonstrates her innocence.

In the real world, ordeals spelled doom for anyone charged with a crime, but in a fantasy universe with active, interventionist deities, ordeals can and do deliver just verdicts. In areas where the worship of chaotic gods predominates, some innocent defendants might gain immunity to heat, fire, or drowning when subjected to trial by ordeal. Deities might gift innocent defendants in trials by combat with hefty attack bonuses and perhaps even temporary use of combat feats. Chaotic evil gods might grant bonuses to the more thoroughly vile combatant.

Few prisons exist in medieval societies. Political prisoners of extremely high rank, such as members of the royal family or regal hostages from other lands, are sometimes locked up in dungeons or towers. But the vast bulk of offenders face other fates.

Individuals of high standing are typically punished with exile. Exiled offenders must leave the kingdom within a few days and cannot return for an indefinite period. Usually, they return only when a

Illus. by E. Fiegenschuh

A female elf weathers the flames during her ordeal by fire

change of power occurs. Especially heinous crimes might result in hanging or beheading, but only when the judge is confident in her power and the defendant is unpopular with his peers.

In actual medieval societies, those of lower status were often executed for comparatively minor offenses, including petty theft. Convicted offenders were lucky to escape with mere mutilation. Since an authentically grim portrayal of medieval justice violates most players' sense of fun, good-aligned D&D societies are not so harsh. Serious crimes of violence might result in execution, but other crimes result in fines. Convicted criminals might be stripped of rank, along with their dependents, or even forced to labor as villeins. Offenses where no injury is suffered and no property taken or destroyed incur fines as punishment.

For those sentenced to die, decapitation by a headsman is a privilege of rank; ordinary folk face the hangman. The hanged are placed on a structure called a gibbet and prominently displayed, often near the city gates or on a road leading to town. Their decaying corpses serve as a lesson to others. Seasoned travelers can tell when an area is ruled by a lawful evil power center—their roadways abound with gibbets.

OTHER FORMS OF GOVERNMENT

Although most players expect Dungeons & Dragons settings to consist of vaguely medieval kingdoms, you should feel free to create settings based on other periods of history, or with variant or imaginary forms of government. Nations with other forms of government can exist side by side with feudal kingdoms.

In an imperial setting, a single culture has conquered a large number of other nations, making them into provinces of a gigantic empire. In the original homeland of the imperial culture, an emperor rules over a vast bureaucracy of officials. If the empire is still young and in a phase of initial expansion, ranking officials hail from the ruling class of the triumphant culture. Later, as the imperial culture assimilates conquered peoples, ambitious types from all over rise to positions of authority, especially in their original homelands. Each province is ruled by a governor, who supervises a bureaucracy of his own, often made up of relatives and cronies. The imperial government maintains a standing army bent on further conquest. Tax revenues flow from the provinces to the imperial treasury and are then redistributed as the prosperity of the empire demands. The imperial throne might be passed down more or less peacefully within a bloodline, or it might change hands frequently—emperors are bloodily overthrown whenever they lose favor with the military. Empires are always lawful; if they become chaotic, they fall apart.

In a republic, the people are ruled by a governor, president, or prime minister, chosen by election. The election might be democratic, with all adult citizens allowed to vote, but premodern cultures generally enfranchise only wealthy landowners. The leader might rule for life or for a fixed term of office, which might or might not be renewable through reelection. An official bureaucracy administers the government; republics require written constitutions and a strict rule of law.

Republics with rulers chosen not by hereditary landlords but by an organization of elite merchants and burghers are referred to as oligarchies. Leaders shape policies for the promotion of trade and the protection of wealth, but to those outside the circles of power, oligarchies aren't much different from other republics.

In a theocracy, rulers ascend from the ranks of the priesthood, perhaps chosen by the deities themselves. The ruler might be considered to be an earthly incarnation of the national deity. In a fantasy world, this could be literally true. A priestly caste performs administrative duties, and a theocracy's laws come straight from its culture's holy book, its policies intended to further religious faith. National wealth might be devoted to the construction of temples, cathedrals, monuments, or tombs. Theocracies are often conservative, suppressing social changes that conflict with their governing faiths. On the other hand, new prophets sometimes arise to alter the underlying faith, and with it, the nation's laws and goals.

In a tyranny, the leader has taken over by force and rules without traditional authority. Any form of government can

LAW ACROSS BORDERS

Adventurers who have declared fealty in one kingdom can expect fair treatment in any similar land that respects the rule of law. Legal principles and obligations extend beyond borders even when overall authority does not. For example, brigands who commit crimes in one city and then return to their homes in another kingdom can expect to be arrested and prosecuted by authorities there. Trade depends on this sense of legal reciprocity; without it, merchants would be afraid to travel to places where they hold no citizenship rights. This principle also protects adventurers who can claim a rightful place in society. If they stand trial in another land, local authorities tend to treat them fairly. Otherwise, their own vassals or citizens could face legal reprisals when visiting the adventurers' homeland.

If the defendants are mere vagabonds, with no lord or authority to back them up, they must rely entirely on the goodwill of their judges. Reciprocity does not mean that all jurisdictions are equally fair, just that outsiders get more or less the same treatment as locals. A corrupt ruler who abuses his own people gives special consideration to foreigners only if he happens to fear their lord.

Illus. by E. Cox

In a land ruled by a tyrant, slaves do all the hard work

become a tyranny. Tyrants tend to govern by personal fiat, tossing aside the rule of law. Sometimes they are wiser and more just than their legitimate predecessors. More often, they govern by force, enriching a band of loyal thugs who back up their decrees at sword-point. Tyrannies are sometimes called kleptocracies, as they are essentially run by criminal gangs who have taken over the reins of government. These gangs might be the remnants or

THE LAW IN SALTMARSH

As an example of how to set up a system of laws for a D&D town or city, here's how the rules would work for the town of Saltmarsh, which is described in detail in Chapter 4 of this book.

1: Saltmarsh's power center alignment is neutral good, so it starts with a law rank of 2.

2: Despite external trouble with lizardfolk, sahuagin, pirates, smugglers, and slavers, transfers of power in Saltmarsh have been blessed with peace. This increases the town's law rank by 2.

3: Saltmarsh has a written legal code that has existed since the town's founding 130 years ago. Although the laws have been modified numerous times as the town grew, the central concepts have remained solid. This increases the town's law rank by 1 for having a written legal code, and by another 2 for its age.

4: Saltmarsh is located near several wild and dangerous regions, and has always had a strong militia. Today, the town even has a large garrison and prison within its walls. The town councilors, unfortunately, have traditionally been prone to corruption to varying degrees, and this corruption has spread to the militia in some cases. As a result, law enforcement in Saltmarsh is only moderately strong, despite the relatively good strength of the town's militia. This increases the town's law rank by 1.

5: As mentioned above, Saltmarsh has always struggled with corruption. Traditionally, a third to half of the town's officials are corrupt to one degree or another. This reduces the town's law rank by –2.

6: To a certain extent, Saltmarsh's geography is to blame for the disparity between its rich and its poor. The nobles of Saltmarsh live in fancy houses located high up on hills, while the poor are forced to dwell in slums down on the waterfront that often take the brunt of the region's winter storms. Since town councilors are usually also members of the nobility, they tend to favor the upper reaches of its citizens, and as a result, the nobles often receive lenient treatment when they offend against their inferiors. This modifies the town's law rank by –1.

Adding up the results, we find that Saltmarsh has a law rank of 5. There might be some corruption in town, and criminals with connections often go unpunished, but for the most part it's a fairly just and fair place to live.

descendants of tyrannical ruling parties long since driven from power.

BUILDING A CITY

The rules in Chapter 5 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* are excellent for creating settlements in D&D, particularly for locations that the PCs might just be passing through on the way to the dungeon. Usually, you won't need to know much more than a settlement's GP limit and perhaps how it is governed in order to run the game.

But what happens when your players are clamoring for an urban adventure? Or worse, what happens if the PCs decide to settle down and make a specific town or city a home base from which they plan on staging all future adventures?

The simplest answer is to use a city from a pregenerated campaign setting. Saltmarsh has been provided in this book for precisely this purpose. You can change the city's name and the names of its prominent NPCs with little problem, and in so doing can easily customize the city and make it your own. But sometimes this isn't good enough. It can be fun and rewarding to create your own city for the PCs to live in and explore, but at the same time it can be a daunting task.

When you decide to create your own D&D city, the most important thing to keep in mind is "less is more." You don't need to generate the contents of each and every house in the city, nor should you be forced to write up stat blocks for all its citizens. Doing so can often limit your options, as during play, you or your players might come up with new ideas. And although this section uses the word "city" a lot, the advice works just as well if you need to build a thorp, a metropolis, or anything in between.

GEOGRAPHY IS DESTINY

When you're building a city, the easiest way to start is by drawing a map. The map doesn't have to be particularly artistic; it can even be little more than a bunch of labeled circles and squares on a sheet of paper. As long as you can understand its layout, you'll be able to present the city in the same way game after game, and over time, it'll grow and evolve on its own.

Of course, it's tough to map out a city. You need to consider many more variables and factors than when generating a wilderness or dungeon map.

Defense: Cities are often built atop hills, thus forcing any enemies into the undesirable position of being downhill from the target. Larger cities also build walls to help protect its citizens, but that can be a costly process. If possible, a city might include natural landscape features such as cliffs, coastlines, bogs, and other difficult terrain as a natural boundary.

Water: People need water to survive, and when large numbers of people congregate in a small area, the need for water increases as well. Your city should have easy access to water, be it a river or lake, numerous wells that drop into large aquifers, or even a great number of rain barrels and water towers.

Food: The city should have a nearby source of food, such as an ocean or lake for fish, farming fields for cattle and crops, mills for grinding grain, and so on.

Resources: Food, water, and defense allow the citizens of a city to survive, but in order to prosper, those citizens need resources. People need a reason to settle in a region other than survival; as a result, your city should be near some form of valuable commodity. This could be as simple as a large number of mines in the nearby hills, a thriving fishing industry in a lake or ocean, or plentiful farms surrounding the city proper.

Cities are built near rivers or on coastlines; it's easier to move goods by boats and ships than overland. Since a river or coastline can also provide defense against an attack from land and can supply food and water, it's helpful to place your city on the shore of a large body of water. Roads are also a concern. A city should have at least one approach that is relatively easy terrain and clear of obstruction.

Magic can eliminate the need for some or all of these basic requirements. In general, though, you should resist the temptation to do away with them. If you make the city too fantastic, it ceases to be a background for adventure and becomes the adventure itself. Of course, in some cases, this might be exactly what you're looking for!

Finally, try to make some features of the landscape unique. A pinnacle of rock, a tangle of rivers, a lake, a crevasse, swamplands, ruined structures, or unusual buildings and artificial landmarks can give your city a distinctive look that helps to solidify its existence in the minds of your players.

HOW BIG IS THE CITY?

Once you've decided on the surrounding terrain and drawn in important features such as coastlines, rivers, cliffs, forests, and the like, you'll need to determine how much of this region is dominated by the city itself.

The primary factor that determines a city's physical size is its population. As a general rule, you can assume that a single Small or Medium citizen takes up about 1,500 square feet. Thus, a town the size of Saltmarsh should cover an area of about 5,700,000 square feet. Crowded cities are more densely populated, and might only have 1,000 square feet per citizen. Sparsely populated cities, on the other hand, can be sprawling in size, and can have up to 5,000 square feet or more per citizen.

These numbers assume a fair amount of open areas in a city. Roads, rivers, lakes, cemeteries, fairgrounds, parks,

marketplaces, and town squares can take up a significant area of the land.

Of course, cities populated by creatures that are larger or smaller than Small or Medium size are proportionally sized, in a similar way to how these smaller or larger creatures have differing Spaces.

THE CITY'S BUILDINGS

Not all buildings in a city are residences. Each city also has a number of shops, temples, public offices, and the like. Buildings of similar purpose tend to be clustered together, forming specific districts in the city.

Residences (30% of buildings): Homes of citizens. Each residence shelters an average of twenty, ten, or five individuals, depending on the city's population. Most homes sit in districts far from the main thoroughfares and markets, but they can also be found in all other districts.

Administrative (5%): Town halls, militia barracks, city centers, military installations, and so on. Administrative buildings are usually found near the center of town.

Entertainment (5%): Taverns, gambling houses, brothels, playhouses, theaters, and the like. These buildings are usually found near heavily traveled roads or wealthy districts.

Industrial (10%): Shipwrights, carpenters, masons, slaughterhouses, lumberyards, fishmongers, and so on. These buildings are usually found far from residences or mercantile areas, but should have relatively easy access to busy streets or shipping.

Nobility (5%): Mansions, townhouses, villas, and so on. These buildings are typically the farthest from the slums and industrial buildings, often close to administrative buildings.

Shops (10%): Smiths, bakers, jewelers, grocers, alchemists, curio shops, and the like. These buildings are found along heavily traveled areas. Many cities have a large open marketplace near the town's center as well.

Slums (15%): Flophouses, shanties, shacks, and so on. These buildings are usually located in the least desirable section of the city.

Public Works (5%): Temples, parks, graveyards, schools, libraries, public forums, and so on. These buildings are generally located between residences and administrative buildings.

Travel (10%): Inns, shipyards, messengers, stables, and so on. These buildings are generally found along heavily traveled roads.

Farms (5%): Farms are almost always found in the outlying areas of a city, usually outside any city walls. A city that relies on farms for trade could have double or even triple the normal number of farms, often at the expense of industrial buildings.

HOW MANY BUILDINGS?

After you determine a city's size and its boundaries, you can start filling in buildings. The vast majority of the buildings in your city will be residences. As a result, the number of buildings depends on the city's population. At this point, you should decide on your city's population density.

Crowded: A crowded city is bloated with citizens. The reason for the overpopulation can vary—the discovery of a particularly generous vein of gold, a rush of citizens fleeing from another location, or the simple fact that it's the only place safe enough to harbor a city for hundreds of miles around. In a crowded city, the ratio of people to buildings is 20 to 1; there should be a number of buildings equal to 5% of the total population.

Standard: Most cities have a standard population density. This represents a healthy city with constant trade and productivity. In a standard city, the ratio of people to buildings is 10 to 1; therefore, the number of buildings in the city is close to 10% of the city's population.

Sparse: A sparse city is a dying city. For whatever reason, its buildings stand empty and abandoned. Perhaps a plague has taken its toll, an oppressive government has taxed its citizens so brutally that many have moved away, or a recent war or natural disaster has left few survivors. Sparsely populated cities have far too many buildings. The ratio of people to buildings is 5 to 1, so the number of buildings in the city is close to 20% of the city's population.

FILL IN THE DETAILS

Finally, you should be ready to start populating your city. If you know what sections of the city your players are going to be focusing on, you should focus on those areas as well. Taverns and inns are usually among the first places visiting PCs look for in a city, closely followed by temples dedicated to their deities, shops (particularly magic shops), and any guilds they might be affiliated with. Round things out by adding at least two locations in your city that should intrigue or amuse each player in your group; this gives you places to have NPCs talk about that the PCs are more likely to be interested in. If you have the time, jot down a few dozen NPC names on a piece of paper to use as the PCs explore the city. When you use a name, jot down a brief description of who that name was assigned to, where they live, and what they do in the city. And after each session, make sure to write down any interesting developments or additions you (or your players) have made to the city. Over time, your creation will boom into a living, sprawling location unique to your campaign world and familiar to your players, and the next time you run a campaign, you'll have a custom-built city all ready to go!

For an example of a settlement built from the ground up using these guidelines, check out the town of Saltmarsh in Chapter 4.

MAGIC EVENTS

A demon lord wants to ride a comet's tail on a collision course with the world. A mysterious purple mist leaves only deserted villages in its wake. A lens of rare Zoklovian crystal must be fashioned to perform the ritual that keeps the undead at bay for another year.

All of the above are clearly magical effects, but they don't duplicate specific D&D spells, and they generally cover a wide swath of the landscape. Thus, they're examples of a distinct category: magic events. A magic event is more plot device than character ability. The PCs in your group won't use a magic event to clear each room in a dungeon, but a magic event can make for a memorable encounter, especially if the PCs are near the event's "ground zero." An imminent magic event can also be the framework on which you build an adventure—whether the PCs are trying to ignite the event or thwart it.

Furthermore, magic events allow for an air of mystery and the unknown that the spell descriptions in the *Player's Handbook* can't match. Any PC wizard worth her salt knows exactly what the spells in her spellbook can do. She's assessed her spells' strengths and weaknesses, she knows their precise statistics, and when she casts a spell, she knows exactly what the result will be.

On the other hand, wonder and mystery are hallmarks of a magic event. The players rarely know exactly how a magic event functions or what, precisely, it will do. Because a magic event is a plot device, not an effect that's easy for the PCs to reproduce, the event can emphasize the fantastic and awe-inspiring nature of magic.

ELEMENTS OF A MAGIC EVENT

For a magic event to occur, a series of elements must somehow connect and ignite the event. These elements vary widely from one magic event to the next. The Killing Frost of Ghulurak, for example, starts when a block of glacier ice is carved into Ghulurak's form in a ritual combining both fell magic and masterwork sculpture—work that takes only a few hours. The Red Tides of Sorashan, on the other hand, require decades of careful interbreeding before a suitable child can be born and then sacrificed to the sea-demons that live below the Wailing Cliffs. The circumstances, participants, and other building blocks that comprise a magic event always differ from event to event.

However, those building blocks do fall into certain general categories: lore, sources, catalysts, triggers, and controls. When you've combined a building block or two from each category, you have the pieces of your magic event in place. Once you've assembled all the elements, you need only define the event's specific effects, and you have a plot device that can transform an encounter or serve as the focal point of an adventure.

The Lore Element

If the other elements of a magic event are the ingredients, the lore element is the recipe. In its most basic form, the lore element is the instructions that the characters in the game world (whether PC or NPC) will use to create the magic event.

The stereotypical lore element is the magical ritual described in a dusty tome forgotten on the upper shelves of a library somewhere. Only when someone stumbles across the lore element does the magic event associated with it become a possibility. Finding the lore element gets the ball rolling, sending the researcher on a series of quests to assemble the other elements.

It's easy to put your own twist on the lore element by using a different sort of lore. Consider the following options.

Encoded Lore: The instructions for creating the magic event must be decoded before they can be used. They might be written in a hard-to-translate language, a jumbled cipher, or a series of riddles.

Hidden Lore: Even a perfectly legible ancient grimoire becomes problematic if it's secreted away behind a concealed panel or locked up in a lich's crypt.

Instruction: Not all lore is written down. To launch the magic event, the PCs must find an instructor who will tell them how to put the various elements together. The instructor could be almost anyone—a wizened sage, a mysterious stranger, or a demon lord—and might demand payment of some kind in exchange for lore. The instructor might not give out the instructions all at once, distributing only one direction at a time.

Divided Lore: The lore doesn't have to be in one place. The incantation for summoning the Great Gorath might be written on a temple wall, while the incantation for controlling the entity appears on a set of scrolls in a library thousands of miles away.

False Lore: A staple of evil schemers, false lore has a correct set of instructions, but the end result is often not what the steps describe. Many incautious adventurers have tried to cleanse the land of evil, only to open a portal to the Nine Hells because the ritual they used was false lore planted by their enemies.

Folklore: Sometimes lore is commonplace. For example, everyone in a particular village might know that four maidens must dance at the crossroads on the full moon to keep the winter wolves at bay.

Instinctive Lore: Some magic events don't have a separate lore element. When the PCs satisfy the other elements, they suddenly understand how to create the magic event. Everyone who bathes in the waters of Silverdusk Lake, for example, might realize that the nearby wisps of fog feed on magical energy.

Related Lore: The lore element doesn't necessarily have to come first. The PCs initially could learn about one of the other elements, and then conduct research to uncover

the lore connected with it. For example, the PCs could discover a mysterious wellspring of positive energy (an energy source element), and then start searching through libraries to find some way to put the wellspring to use.

The Energy Source Element

Simply put, the energy source element is the fuel that makes the magic event happen. The element isn't necessarily energy in the D&D sense of the word or a definition based in modern physics. Because magic is involved, the energy source can be nearly anything.

Abstract Magical: Sometimes magic itself is the energy source for the event. A magic conflagration might spontaneously erupt from a "cosmic wellspring," or magical energy could be drawn from spellcasters trying to bring the magic event into being. A group of Pelor's clerics, for example, could expend a certain number of spell slots to send a consecrating wave of positive energy across the land.

Alignment-Based: Creatures, places, or objects of great evil, good, law, or chaos can provide their own energy. Examples of alignment-based energy sources include a bound demon or a good cathedral from which magical energy can be siphoned.

Biological: Frequently, evil magic events are powered with blood, human sacrifice, or other unsavory energy sources. This effect need not be fatal; it's possible to create a magic event that draws just enough energy from participants to weaken them or age them prematurely.

Energy/Elemental: Many magic events draw strength from one of D&D's energy types (fire, cold, electricity, sonic, and acid) or Inner Planes (Air, Earth, Fire, Water, Negative Energy, and Positive Energy). Such magic events typically require either proximity to the energy source (such as an event that emerges from a volcanic crater) or a magical conduit to the energy source.

Mineral: Inanimate objects—especially rare or valuable ones—can fuel a magic event. It might take ninety-nine emeralds to fuel the animation of a giant stone colossus. The silky web-strands of spiders trapped in Limbo could be the energy source for a network of webs that spreads across the Material Plane.

Psionic: While not technically "magic," psionic energy sources can provide the catalyst and ongoing impetus required to substantiate an event. These sources include the pooled minds of sinister illithids, a psionic engine that siphons mental energy from an unsuspecting populace, or a rare crystal asteroid above the world that wakes to psychic sentience.

The Catalyst Element

A catalyst is a substance or energy that mixes with or connects to the energy source, transforming it into the manifestation of the magic event. Catalysts fall into the same categories as energy sources; they can be biological, mineral, alignment-based, and so on. The catalyst differs from the energy source in one or more of the following respects.

Size: A catalyst is often smaller or weaker in some respect than an energy source. An active volcano might be an energy source, but magic flames or a single jet of lava might suffice for a catalyst.

Portability: When creating a magic event, the PCs usually bring the catalyst to the energy source, not the other way around. A magic event might be spawned by mixing a pint of lamia's blood (catalyst) into the moon-pools of the Arthagian Forest (energy source).

Refinement: Energy sources are usually raw and unworked, but catalysts often require alchemical refinement, craftwork of some kind, or similar development before they're suitable for the magic event. Berries tended by high-mountain druids might be the catalyst for a magic event that causes animals across the land to morph into their dire versions.

The Trigger Element

The trigger element is a precondition for the magic event. Sometimes it's a physical object or creature, but often it's a limitation in the time or location that will spawn a magic event.

Object: Some magic events happen only when a physical object is brought into the proximity of the energy source and catalyst. The object is often rare, valuable, or magical. Sometimes it must interact with the energy source and catalyst in a specific way, such as a silver ladle that must stir a cauldron thirty times, clockwise.

Creature: A magic event might require the presence of a specific person—or at least a specific kind of person. Fantasy literature offers many examples of magic events that work only around characters of royal blood, for example.

Time: Some magic events work only "when the stars are right." Others might work only during specific seasons or under certain weather conditions.

Location: A particularly sacred or profane place might be the trigger element for a magic event. Locations with historical or mystical significance also make good trigger elements.

The Control Element

Some magic events (such as the Consuming Vortex of Traal, described below) run amok once they begin. Other magic events can be controlled, usually by those who brought the elements together and created the event in the first place.

Instinctive: The simplest control system is an instinctive one; the creator of the magic event has an innate ability to control its effects. The creator of a pillar of flame,

for example, might be able to direct its movement with a thought or by a verbal command.

Physical Control: Other magic events require the manipulation of a tangible object for control. Sometimes the control element is the trigger. For example, the Burning Eye of Al-Ghautra (described below) requires a diamond lens to focus the sun's rays and create the Burning Eye. Once the eye exists, pointing the lens determines where it stares.

Focus Item: This control element is like a physical control, except that it's portable and doesn't rely on direct manipulation to function. Instead, possession of the focus item grants the ability to control the magic event. Often, the focus item is a finely wrought object or magic item.

Spell Control: Some magic events respond to spells cast by their creator (or, potentially, someone else). Such control might be rudimentary (a magical hurricane that changes direction when faced with a *control weather* spell) or fine (a rampaging stone colossus that receives commands through a *Rary's telepathic bond* spell).

THE ACTIVE EVENT

Once someone brings the various elements together in the manner specified by the lore, the magic event becomes active. This is where you pull out all the stops, describing fire in the sky, rainbow energy-rays, luminous ghosts tearing through the countryside, and other special effects that would do Hollywood proud.

But what does the event actually do? That's up to you—anything goes. Don't feel constrained by how magic usually works. You're striving for a powerful, wondrous effect, not rigid adherence to the way a particular spell or monster behaves. If you want to create a milewide purple cloud that fires black lightning every other round and turns those it engulfs into ducks, more power to you.

However, you can use existing spells and effects as tools to help describe the game effects of your event. In the (intentionally silly) example above, you could say that the duck effect is similar to a *baleful polymorph* effect. Once you've set the effective caster level and the Difficulty Class of the Fortitude save, you have an easy way to adjudicate the situation if the PCs wind up inside the purple fog. Because you've connected the magic event to a known effect, you have a sense of which creatures might be immune to the purple cloud and how ducklike PCs might regain their normal forms. You can also put your own twist on the effect. You could rule, for example, that characters resist the purple cloud with a Will save, or that the black lightning hits with a ranged touch attack rather than forcing a Reflex save.

Changing Events: A magic event doesn't necessarily spring into being fully formed. You can describe a delay of several rounds, minutes, or hours before the magic event emerges. The event might be weak and localized at first, growing in strength and size at a specified rate. Its nature might even change at some point; for example, the Consuming Vortex of Traal becomes mobile and gains intelligence once it has devoured enough souls.

STOPPING THE EVENT

Most D&D adventures involving magic events cast the PCs in the role of spoilers, determined to stop or neutralize the event before it harms innocents or wreaks havoc. More rarely, the PCs try to create the magic event (or guard those who try), in which case they must be alert for enemies intent on sabotage.

Preempting the Event: The easiest way to stop a magic event is to capture, sabotage, or destroy one of the elements before it is combined with the others. If the PCs can break the diamond lens, for example, they ensure that the Burning Eye of Al-Ghautra never opens. If the villains can kidnap the princess, they can stop the clerics of Heironeous from performing the Rite of Royal Valor.

Stopping an Active Event: If the magic event is already active, would-be saboteurs have a harder task. Depending on the event, it still might be possible to eliminate or neutralize the event by seizing control of one of the elements.

Other magic events don't require a connection to their constituent elements once the event starts. Such events might have to be stopped directly, attacking the manifestation of the event with magic or force of arms. Perhaps only a complementary event (with its own set of required elements) can eliminate the first magic event and restore the status quo.

If you're using a magic event as an important part of an adventure, develop multiple ways that the PCs or villains can stop the event.

EXAMPLE MAGIC EVENTS

The following magic events use the elements outlined above. They're designed to be easy to drop into an ongoing campaign.

BURNING EYE OF AL-GHAUTRA

The Burning Eye of Al-Ghautra is a giant flaming eye that appears atop a mountain. It can cause anything it sees to burst into magic flames.

Lore: Directions for creating the Burning Eye of Al-Ghautra are carved into the walls of ancient subterranean temples devoted to Al-Ghautra, about whom little is known. Apparently some sort of powerful priest or demigod, Al-Ghautra sought to bring light and fire everywhere, even the darkest underground reaches.

Energy Source: The sun itself is the energy source for the Burning Eye.

Catalyst: Creating the Burning Eye requires unnaturally clear atmospheric conditions. A *control weather* spell cast on a day that's clear and sunny to begin with is necessary for the birth of the Burning Eye.

Trigger: This magic event has two triggers. The first is a 3-foot-wide lens made of purest diamond (hardness 20, hit points 40) and ensorcelled to magnify the sun's rays. The diamond lens was broken into three parts after the last creation of the Burning Eye centuries ago. Pelor's church guards two shards of the lens and keeps them separated from each other, but no one knows the location of the third shard.

The other trigger element is a location. The Burning Eye of Al-Ghautra will emerge only above a mountain that's at least 15,000 feet tall.

Control: The diamond lens is also the control element. Anyone grasping the edges of the lens and peering through it can redirect the gaze of the Burning Eye.

Effects: Once the reassembled diamond lens is brought to the mountaintop and the strong rays of the sun shine through it, the Burning Eye begins to form. The lens floats in midair a few feet above the peak, and over the course of the next 10 minutes, a massive eyeball composed of bright flame appears 100 feet above the mountain peak.

Once the Burning Eye forms, the magic event is active and no longer requires good weather above the mountain peak. Anyone looking through the diamond lens can clearly see a circular area with a 40-foot radius, even if it's hundreds of miles away. As long as line of sight exists from the Burning Eye to the target area, it can be viewed through the lens.

The area viewed through the lens is brightly lit (as a *daylight* spell) no matter what the weather conditions or time of day. It also provides a *true seeing* effect for the viewer. If the lens views the same area for 2 rounds in a row, the Burning Eye does more than just illuminate. It creates a *fire storm* effect (as the spell, caster level 15th, Reflex DC 20) that deals 15d6 points of fire damage if the sun is shining on the mountain peak, 10d6 points of fire damage if it's daytime but cloudy, or 5d6 points of fire damage if it's night.

Unlike the *fire storm* spell, any creatures caught within the Burning Eye's area risks catching on fire (see page 303 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) if they take fire damage. Buildings and forests likewise catch fire

Illus. by E. Cox

The Burning Eye of Al-Ghautra explodes into existence

and burn to the ground if caught in the Burning Eye's gaze. Fires spread as described in Forest Fires, page 87 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

As a practical matter, the creators of the Burning Eye usually keep the lens moving, scanning for intruders who would try to end the magic event. Such intruders get 1 round of warning before the *fire storm* hits, because they notice that their surroundings are unusually brightly lit.

To Stop: When fire cultists last lit the Burning Eye of Al-Ghautra several centuries ago, heroes affiliated with the church of Pelor eliminated the eye by reaching the mountain summit and breaking the diamond lens. That remains an effective way to stop the magic event.

Merely obscuring the sun with weather won't do the trick, but a solar eclipse (perhaps a magic event of its own) would cause the eye to wink out and the lens to shatter into diamond dust. Dealing 50 points of cold damage to the Burning Eye will cause it to "blink" for 1 round, gazing nowhere. If the cold damage can be sustained somehow, the Burning Eye won't reopen.

CONSUMING VORTEX OF TRAAL

An ebon sphere that functions like a magical version of a black hole, the Consuming Vortex of Traal ingests only the living. The more living creatures it devours, the stronger and smarter it grows.

Lore: Several manuscripts purport to describe the process of creating the Consuming Vortex of Traal, but all are fragmentary and incomplete. Filling in the missing parts requires ten separate *divination* or *contact other plane* spells—only the deities and similar great powers know the missing details of vortex creation. Creatures that try to create a vortex with incomplete or inaccurate instructions are sucked against their will to the Negative Energy Plane when they create the *gate* (as described below).

Energy Source: The vortex itself is made of absolute nothingness, but it requires an influx of negative energy at the moment of creation. Anyone seeking to create the Consuming Vortex of Traal must create a *gate* (as the spell) to the Negative Energy Plane, and then call forth pure negative energy. This drains the caster as would calling forth a creature, costing him or her 1,000 XP.

Catalyst: The negative energy that emerges from the *gate* must fill a gold-inlaid, cylindrical cage some 10 feet across (which costs 10,000 gp to make). An inky blackness fills the cage and pulses gently until the trigger moment.

Trigger: When the new moon reaches its apogee, the negative energy consumes the cage. The 10-foot-wide black sphere extrudes nine flickering tentacles another 10 feet from its surface. The vortex then begins to consume any nearby creatures.

Control: At first, no force can move the Consuming Vortex of Traal. But once it grows as described below, it gains the ability to move. Positive energy repulses the vortex, so some clerics can crudely "steer" the vortex by channeling turn undead attempts into it. Turning damage sufficient to turn a 10 HD undead forces the vortex to move 10 feet directly away from the cleric.

Effects: The Consuming Vortex of Traal is in some respects like a creature, and in other respects like a magic effect. Its nine tentacles make +15 melee touch attacks against all creatures within reach (split up as evenly as possible), and once a tentacle hits, it stays attached to its target. A creature struck by a tentacle must succeed on a series of increasingly difficult Will saves: DC 15 in the first round, DC 20 in the second round, DC 25 in the third round, and so on. Creatures that fail a Will save are instantly slain as they're sucked into the vortex; their agonized features appear briefly in relief on the surface of the vortex, and then they're gone.

Each tentacle is intangible and immune to physical and magical attacks, but a creature can escape from one by using a spell from the teleportation subschool or by channeling turning damage into the vortex sufficient to turn a 10 HD undead. Merely running away does no good; the tentacles stretch and reach through solid matter, if necessary, to maintain a connection with their target.

Because the vortex is sessile at first, an evil cleric who brings it into being often has a number of sacrificial victims handy to feed into the vortex until it grows and gains mobility. Once the vortex has consumed 100 Hit Dice of creatures, it grows to a diameter of 15 feet, and its tentacles likewise extend their reach to 15 feet. It also starts to move at a speed of 20 feet per round. The vortex possesses only a rudimentary intellect at this time and seeks large congregations of living creatures that it can consume more quickly. The vortex completely ignores matter, floating down narrow corridors, through floors and ceilings, and so on.

When the vortex has consumed a further 200 Hit Dice of creatures, it reaches its maximum size of 20 feet across with 20-foot-long tentacles. Its speed likewise increases to 60 feet per round. At this stage, the vortex knows enough to seek concentrations of life such as cities and to retreat when faced with positive energy attacks (as described below).

To Stop: Disrupting the *gate* spell or damaging the cage before the apogee of the new moon ruins the ritual that creates the Consuming Vortex of Traal—and it might suck the would-be creator of the vortex into the Negative Energy Plane.

Once the vortex consumes the cage and extrudes its tentacles, however, it's much harder to stop. The PCs might try to prevent the vortex from consuming 100

Hit Dice of creatures, and then securely wall it off so it can't reach more victims. Some ancient laboratories and dungeons probably have quiescent Consuming Vortices, gently waving their tentacles across empty rooms until unwitting explorers disturb them.

Characters in close proximity to a vortex can get a measure of protection by relying on teleportation magic (to get away if a tentacle touches them) or through spells such as *death ward* that protect against negative energy. *Death ward* doesn't provide complete protection, however; it merely gives the tentacles a 50% miss chance when attacking a creature protected by the spell.

The only known way to destroy a Consuming Vortex of Traal is to channel a massive amount of positive energy into it—a successful turning check, made from within 10 feet of the vortex, high enough to affect a 20 HD undead and that deals enough turning damage to affect 100 Hit Dice of undead.

Illus. by K. Andrasofszky

An evil cleric tries to master the Consuming Vortex of Traal

AVATAR OF THE HORDE

Evil humanoids, such as orcs and goblins, occasionally gather into great hordes to raid the lands of men and their allies. At their center, always, is a leader strong enough to gather more than his own tribe to his banner. These leaders, fearsome as they might be, are but a pale shadow of the champions of destruction known as Avatars of the Horde. Gifted with more than simple physical might, an Avatar of the Horde holds a supernatural sway over great numbers of dangerous humanoids and giants, building an army of tremendous size composed of many different races. While a powerful orc chieftain might be able to gather several large orc tribes to his banner and bully a few tribes of goblins into service, an Avatar of the Horde instinctively exerts control over many races at once, including powerful giants and monstrous humanoids.

Lore: Many great heroes have undertaken long and dangerous quests to seek out and destroy the knowledge of the ritual needed to create an Avatar of the Horde. Because of these efforts, learning how to create this magic event is extremely difficult. A creature wishing to learn the ritual must find one of the few remaining texts that describe the ritual, and study the text successfully. Gleaning this information from the obscure and ancient text requires that the potential avatar succeed on a DC 15 Knowledge (arcana) check. In a few very rare cases, the orc deity Gruumsh has imparted knowledge of the ritual directly to one of his favored followers, circumventing the efforts of heroes seeking to prevent the ritual from taking place. The ritual itself is actually an arduous test of the potential avatar's might and dedication, and it is described in full in the effects section below.

Energy Source: The Avatar of the Horde, however powerful it may be, cannot compel a fractious group of armies for long without continuous magical energy. The ancient and foul rituals that give rise to the Avatar of the Horde also set in motion a continuous and subtle magical force that keeps the horde bound together. This gentle compulsion is enough to bind the horde to the will of the Avatar, but it requires continuous energy to maintain. This magical force is fueled by the deaths of those slain at the horde's hands. The horde cares nothing of the race, alignment,

or nature of the creatures killed. As long as the armies of the horde bring death to at least one thousand creatures each month, the magical force that binds them into one army remains active.

Catalyst: The ritual that culminates the trial of the horde requires a small amount of blood from each of the races to be bound into the horde. Eligible creature types include humanoid (orc), humanoid (goblinoid), humanoid (gnoll), monstrous humanoid, and giant.

Trigger: The trigger for the Avatar of the Horde coming into power is the completion of the trial of the horde, a long and complicated quest that requires significant might and dedication. The avatar must single-handedly slay one member of each race to be included in the horde. Once all these combats are complete, the potential avatar must journey to an ancient holy site in the far north, where many believe that Gruumsh and Corellon Larethian fought one of their many battles. The avatar must cause the death of thirteen elves at this site (and so must also manage to get the elves to the site).

Once the trial of the horde is complete, the avatar can bind a number of distinct races into the horde equal to 3 × his Cha modifier. If the avatar's Charisma modifier changes after the completion of the trial of the horde, there is no change in the number of races that the avatar can include in the horde.

Control: The Avatar of the Horde maintains a subtle, instinctive control over the horde at all times. Creatures of the horde regard the avatar as a creature of power and a true leader. Their disposition is never less than friendly toward it, and often includes an almost worshipful devotion. Although the fractious races of the horde generally follow the directives of the Avatar of the Horde, they are less firmly tied to one another. Open fighting is uncommon, but sometimes seen within the ranks of the horde. This infighting usually occurs between large and powerful tribes of lesser humanoids such as orcs and goblins. Few orc tribes will tangle with giants or trolls, but they hope to profit by weakening lesser members of the horde. Any enterprising chieftain, while bound to the horde, remains alert for opportunities to weaken tribes that lair near his own.

Effects: The singular effect of an Avatar of the Horde is to bind fractious tribes from many different and warlike races into a cohesive army. Destruction fuels the horde and keeps it together, so the Avatar of the Horde must constantly push its army onward. The exact numbers of each type of creature available to the Avatar of the Horde are determined by the DM, but a reasonable estimate is somewhere around one hundred individual creatures per Hit Die of the Avatar.

To Stop: The most direct way to shatter the might of the horde is to destroy its leader. Without the magical strength behind the Avatar of the Horde, the fractious races cannot abide to remain as one army, and they return to their normal homelands, fighting each other along the way. In addition, if the horde fails to slay at least 1,000 individuals each month, the magical force that binds it together fails, and it dissipates.

KILLING FROST OF GHULURAK

Locked beyond the boundaries of both space and time, Ghulurak, a being of ancient and frozen madness, conjures ageless nightmares of frozen worlds. Within the dark dreams of Ghulurak, whole worlds lie stilled to frozen unlife. Ghulurak would freeze all life, binding living worlds into a frozen rigor of agony and insanity. Driven by the dark images of Ghulurak, some maddened individuals carve this image from the purest ice of polar glaciers, allowing Ghulurak's frozen power a way to access the material world. Once this pathway lies open, a desolate region of cold spreads ever outward, driving frost and hunger before it. Those who aren't slain outright by the frigid temperatures eventually fall victim to the maddening image of Ghulurak, and begin working to protect and serve the frozen monstrosity.

Lore: A few forgotten fragments of lore hold descriptions of the Killing Frost of Ghulurak and its effects. Learning the details of the Killing Frost requires a DC 40 Knowledge (history) check. Some lore is so precise, though, that it causes the image of Ghulurak to fester in the reader's mind, and drives her to madness. Any creature that rolls a 50 or higher on an attempt to learn of the Killing Frost is exposed to a description so precise that she must succeed on a DC 25 Will save or fall under the effect of a *geas* spell that directs the reader to create the statue and complete the ritual that brings the Killing Frost into existence.

Energy Source: The Killing Frost of Ghulurak draws power from a being of vast and ancient evil. Any true replica of its frozen and twisted form allows the creature Ghulurak to send a slender icicle of its power into the worlds of men. Once such a replica exists, Ghulurak powers the killing frost that bears its name.

Trigger: The Killing Frost of Ghulurak starts when pure glacier ice is carved into Ghulurak's form in a ritual combining both fell magic and masterwork sculpture—work that takes many hours. The statue requires a cube of ice at least 20 feet by 20 feet by 20 feet. Creating the statue requires 80 hours of labor, and it must be carved by hand. Interrupting the work on the statue does not disrupt the creation process, but all 80 hours of work must be finished before the rest of the ritual can be completed. Once the time has been spent working on the statue, the sculptor must succeed on a DC 25 Craft (sculpting) check or the effort is wasted and she must begin again. As soon as a statue of sufficient quality is complete, three separate *symbols of insanity* must

be graven into the base of the statue within an hour of its completion.

To even begin the process, the sculptor must have been exposed to a precise description of Ghulurak's form (see Lore above) or have been dominated by the madness within an existing Heart of Ghulurak (see below).

Control: Ghulurak's frozen madness lurks beyond both time and knowledge, and no force can control the killing frost made manifest by his power.

Effects: The Killing Frost of Ghulurak spreads slowly from the immobile ice statue that brings it into being. As the frost spreads, three distinct areas of dangerous cold emerge, growing in severity and danger the nearer they are to the statue itself.

Frost Fringe: The Frost Fringe, the first and least dangerous of the zones of cold that surround the statue of Ghulurak, is a 10-mile-deep ring. The entire area of the frost fringe has a temperature that ranges from 10° to 20° Fahrenheit, exposing creatures in it to the dangers inherent to cold weather (see page 302 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

The Killing Frost: The second zone of cold, and in most cases the largest, is known as the Killing Frost of Ghulurak. The killing frost expands out from the statue, increasing in size at a rate of 1 mile in radius per week. The killing frost begins where the innermost zone ends and extends out depending on how long the statue of Ghulurak has been in existence. The temperature within the area of the killing frost never rises above –20° F. This extreme cold has several effects: unprotected characters take 1d6 points of cold damage per 10 minutes (no save). In addition, an unprotected character must make a Fortitude save (DC 15, + 1 per previous check) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. Those wearing metal armor or coming into contact with very cold metal are affected as if by a *chill metal* spell. A partially protected character takes damage and makes saving throws once per hour instead of once per 10 minutes.

The Heart of Ghulurak: The area closest to the frozen statue of Ghulurak holds within it a brutal madness that warps those who dare to enter it. Within a 1-mile radius of the statue, an area called the Heart of Ghulurak, the temperature remains unearthly cold at all times, hovering around –60° F. Unprotected characters take 1d6 points of cold damage and 1d4 points of nonlethal damage per minute (no save). Partially protected characters take damage once every 10 minutes instead of once every minute.

Although dangerous, the cold radiating from Ghulurak's frozen visage is but a precursor to the mental assault that those close to the statue must endure. Creatures that take damage from the cold temperatures must succeed on a DC 25 Will save each hour spent within 1 mile of the statue or fall under the sway of Ghulurak's mad dreams. This is a supernatural effect identical to a *dominate monster* spell (caster level 20th), except that it has no maximum duration and is not subject to spell resistance. Creatures dominated in this manner strive to protect the Heart of Ghulurak and to lure (or force) others to succumb to the will of Ghulurak. In addition to following the will of Ghulurak, those dominated hold in their minds the true form of Ghulurak and, should the original statue be destroyed, they are compelled to create one anew. This effect can be broken only by a *break enchantment* spell cast within a *hallowed* area. Many evil creatures fall easily under Ghulurak's sway, and work to bind others to the frozen dreams of their master. These fell creatures rampage throughout the regions known as the frost fringe and the killing frost.

The most insidious manifestation of Ghulurak's ice-rimmed madness, the Heart of Ghulurak can eventually expand to cover a world. Should the killing frost ever remain manifested for a century, the heart begins to expand, pushing outward from its icy center, its radius increasing by 1 mile every month. Ancient lore tells of worlds lost to the frozen insanity of Ghulurak, for should the heart ever spread to cover an entire world, Ghulurak itself is made manifest on the world and forever holds dominion over it.

The Form of Ghulurak: Imbued with magic and madness from Ghulurak, the completed statue exudes a magical effect that few can resist. Those wishing to destroy the statue must endure its terrifying mental barrage and defeat those who have already been overwhelmed by the madness of Ghulurak. The magic of its creation makes the statue much more resistant to damage than normal ice. The Form of Ghulurak has hardness 5 and 10 hit points per inch of thickness. A typical statue, carved from a 20-foot block, is about 15 feet thick, giving it 1,800 hit points.

To Stop: The Killing Frost of Ghulurak can be stopped only by destroying the Form of Ghulurak. Crucial to the conjuration of the killing frost, this statue feeds the energy of the killing frost. Once the statue is destroyed, the lands affected by the frost fringe or the killing frost return to their normal seasonal weather over the course of several days. The effects of the Heart of Ghulurak fade much more slowly. The radius of the Heart of Ghulurak shrinks at a rate of 5 feet per month, and its full effects remain in any area that it still covers. Even after the wider frost has long since faded from memory, the Heart of Ghulurak can twist those who walk within it to madness, driving them to carve Ghulurak's form anew from some other shard of ancient ice.

LIGHT OF PURITY

The Light of Purity moves through the world as a mobile and physical manifestation of the might of Pelor. Clerics

of the Lord of Light call forth this glowing nimbus of pure light on their most sacred holiday, and one of their number must renew the Light once each day and once each night. The Light is both a tangible symbol of the might of Pelor and one of the church's most powerful weapons against evil and undead creatures. The power of the Light of Purity quickly destroys any undead creature that comes within its brilliant radius, and it likewise blasts the flesh of innately evil creatures such as demons and devils. Although Pelor's clerics are usually loath to take the Light of Purity out of the confines of the holy site where it is created, when the church of Pelor marches to war, the Light is brought to the fore to bring down the church's greatest foes.

Lore: The church of Pelor's greatest temples house annals of lore that describe how to summon and control the Light of Purity. A cleric of Pelor can recall the exact details of the ceremony by succeeding on a DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check.

Energy Source: The Light of Purity is maintained by the combined will of the clerics of Pelor and the might of the Lord of Light himself. As a token of the order's vigilance and dedication to the Light of Purity, one cleric of Pelor must cast *daylight* into the Light each day at noon and each night at midnight. The cleric need not be the same for each casting, and in fact the privilege of casting the spell is rotated through the ranks of the most powerful and influential clerics within the order. If a cleric fails to do this, Pelor withdraws his might and the Light of Purity is extinguished.

Catalyst: Every one hundred years, in the height of summer on a clear day, Pelor stretches forth his might and creates the Day of Sun. This day, sacred to the church of Pelor for many reasons, is the only day during which the clerics of Pelor can summon forth the Light of Purity.

Trigger: One hundred clerics of Pelor must gather within a temple of Pelor specially prepared for the occasion and they must all cast *daylight*. In addition to casting the spell at the ceremony, all the participating clerics must devote a solid week to preparing themselves for the event. Along with the presence and spellcasting of the clerics themselves, the ceremony requires at least 10,000 gp in special materials. The ceremony can be performed only in a temple dedicated to Pelor and warded by a *hallow* spell.

Control: The Light of Purity is usually stationary, but a cleric of Pelor can channel the power of his god into the Light and cause it to move slowly. A cleric of Pelor can expend one of his daily turn undead attempts to move the Light. To do this, the cleric rolls a turning check as normal. If the cleric is successful in turning a 10 Hit Dice or greater undead, he gains control of the Light for 1 minute. While a cleric controls the Light, he can take a standard action to move the Light 30 feet. Once a cleric has control of the Light, that control cannot be wrested away until the minute has passed. If two clerics attempt to gain control of the Light at the same time, the cleric who would have turned an undead creature with the most Hit Dice succeeds in gaining control of the Light.

Effects: The Light of Purity is a moving magical effect with a 40-foot radius. It is impervious to magical effects, and is completely incorporeal and capable of moving through solid matter. By itself, the Light is stationary, but a cleric of Pelor can use a turn undead attempt to move it (see above). The Light of Purity has several effects on creatures and objects that come within its radius:

Undead creatures and creatures with the evil subtype take 10d6 points of damage at the beginning of each round that they are within the Light of Purity.

The Light of Purity illuminates everything within its radius flawlessly. It suppresses all invisibility effects within its radius as the *invisibility purge* spell, and it automatically dispels any magical darkness effects that its light comes in contact with.

To Stop: The Light of Purity is extinguished only if a cleric of Pelor fails to cast a *daylight* spell into the heart of the magical effect once at noon each day and once each night at midnight. The only way to darken the magical effect is to prevent such a casting. Only one *daylight* spell need be cast on the Light of Purity at each time, and the clerics of Pelor place great importance on the ceremony, assembling many of their church's most powerful members at the time of each casting.

SPIRIT OF NATURE'S RAGE

Within the unknowable spirit of the ancient forests lies a vast and slumbering power. This power rarely manifests in the world of mortal creatures, lacking a will to guide it. It is sometimes sensed—a thunderstorm of unusual strength carries with it a feeling of unquestioned dread, powerful dire animals venture from their usual haunts with violent intent, and similar unexplained events occur when this ancient power comes more firmly in touch with the world of humankind. Ancient rites, their origin bound to the very creation of the world, provide a means to awaken and control this power, and some powerful and dedicated druids can call it forth.

Lore: The knowledge required to call upon the Spirit of Nature's Rage can be found hidden in remote sites of great natural beauty and power. The fragments of lore are always recorded in an ancient form of the Sylvan language. The details of the locations and the lore contained change from site to site, but some examples where this lore might be found include: emblazoned on mountaintops, engraved into rocks buried beneath the roots of an

ancient tree, or etched into a great obsidian slab in the heart of a volcano.

In the rare instance that they can even be found, these fragments of lore are also usually attended by fell guardians with purposes of their own for this information. Anuraxyus, an ancient gold wyrm, for example, slumbers in the heart of a volcano near one of the fragments, intent on ensuring that no evil force can bend the power of Nature's Rage to its own ends. In sharp contrast to the noble intent of the dragon is Maelbranch, an evil treant gifted with extraordinary druid spellcasting ability, which harbors another fragment within the ancient forest that it rules, seeking to gather more fragments so that it can awaken the spirit.

Energy Source: Nature's nearly limitless power fuels the Spirit of Nature's Rage, and once the magical event has come into being, it needs no further resources to maintain its powerful effects.

Catalyst: The ancient rites that awaken the Spirit of Nature's Rage require a menhir circle to stand for a great deal of time in a natural location. The menhirs must stand long enough to become bound to the slow power of nature itself, the length of time depending on the nature of the location. The possible locations of menhir circles that can be used for this purpose and the time that they must stand in place are given below.

Location	Circle Must Stand For
Forest	2,000 years
Mountaintop	10,000 years
Plains	1,000 years
Underground	10,000 years

The length of time required is so great that few mortal creatures can find a way to construct a menhir circle themselves, guard its existence for the required time, and then complete the ritual. Those few times that the Spirit of Nature's Rage has been invoked have been the result of generations of druids devoting their lives to the protection and preservation of a suitable menhir circle.

Such a circle must be made of stone from near the location itself, and the magical rituals and crafting required to prepare the site cost an additional 10,000 gp above and beyond the difficulty of obtaining the stone and transporting it to the area. No menhir circle can ever be used more than once to invoke the Spirit of Nature's Rage.

Trigger: When a menhir circle of sufficient age is available, the Spirit of Nature's Rage can be brought forth by a circle of druids who simultaneously cast *storm of vengeance*, *elemental swarm*, *summon nature's ally VII*, *transport via plants*, *awaken*, and *animal growth* into prepared menhirs. One druid must cast each spell, all commencing casting at the same time while standing within the menhir circle itself. None of these spells have a normal effect when cast in this manner, and serve only to awaken the event.

No undead creature, regardless of druid spellcasting ability, can ever be part of a circle that controls the Spirit of Nature's Rage. If a creature that is part of the circle somehow becomes undead, it is removed from the circle and loses the special power to influence those creatures that remain bound by the Spirit of Nature's Rage.

Control: The magical force of the Spirit of Nature's Rage cannot itself be controlled; its effects bind a large number of dire animals, plants, fey, and elemental creatures to the magic of one circle of druid spellcasters.

Effects: Once awakened, the Spirit of Nature's Rage binds hundreds of natural creatures to the circle that created the event. The exact number and nature of the creatures bound in this manner is left to the discretion of the DM as fits the needs of the campaign, but in general it includes hundreds of animals, dire animals, elementals, fey creatures, and plant creatures. These creatures vary greatly in power, but a significant number of them are dire animals, elementals, and fey of great power. These creatures share an empathic link with any druid from the circle who stands within the menhir circle. This link allows the druid to direct the movements of these creatures, causing them to gather in one place like an army, guard a specific area, or hunt alone in small groups.

The most powerful ability of the Spirit of Nature's Rage, however, is its ability to transmit the magic of the circle members across great distances and to a great number of creatures at one time. Any spell that a circle druid casts within the menhirs can be cast directly on one of the menhirs. This transmits the effect to all the creatures bound to the circle that could be affected by the spell. For example, if a druid casts *animal growth* into a menhir, all the animals linked to the druid by the Spirit of Nature's Rage gain the benefit of the spell, regardless of their distance from the circle. Spells with a range of personal cannot be cast into a menhir in this fashion, nor can spells that affect only an area rather than a specific target. For example, *bull's strength* can be cast into a menhir in this fashion, but *flame strike* cannot. Spells that require expensive components or an expenditure of XP to cast require only one expenditure of the required component to affect all the creatures bound by the Spirit of Nature's Rage.

To Stop: The fathomless and ancient power of nature can never be completely quelled, but the direct effects of the Spirit of Nature's Rage can be stopped by killing all the druids in the circle that triggered the event or by destroying the menhirs that make up the circle. Neither task is simple, since the druids control legions of natural creatures that they can use to protect themselves and the circle, including advanced treants, magically augmented dire animals, and elementals of great age and power.

Illus. by A. Swekel

Not every moment of a Dungeons & Dragons campaign takes place in a dripping dungeon, dusty crypt, or haunted cavern. Eventually, the PCs will retreat to civilization to rest, recuperate, and relax. They'll search for a town or city where they can identify magic items, study mysterious discoveries, and seek new adventures.

But what if the adventure you're running doesn't provide details on any nearby cities? Worse, what happens if the PCs end up staying in town for days, weeks, or even months to create magic items, seek cohorts, or otherwise interact with the world? It helps to have a detailed city or town ready, and this chapter aims to provide just that with the town of Saltmarsh.

ABOUT SALTMARSH

Longtime D&D fans no doubt recognize the town of Saltmarsh, which was originally introduced in 1981 in dungeon module *U1: The Sinister Secret of Saltmarsh*. This module was followed by two more adventures, *U2: Danger at Dunwater* and *U3: The Final Enemy*. This chapter omits details of those adventures to avoid spoiling their plots for newer players.

As presented in the modules, Saltmarsh was a blank slate. No map of the town existed, and precious few NPCs were detailed (most of them being villains who weren't expected to survive the adventure). Yet the town played an important role in the three adventures as a home base for the PCs. Each adventure featured a short description of the town and gave some brief notes on its government and population, but the bulk of the details were left to the Dungeon Master.

The town of Saltmarsh presented here exists several years after the events in those adventures. In that time, slavers attacked the nearby town of Seaton, razing much of the city. The combination of refugees flooding into Saltmarsh and the influx of money from numerous suddenly rich adventurers fresh from ordeals in the nearby Hool Marshes, has nearly doubled the town's population of two thousand. Now, Saltmarsh is one of the most rapidly growing towns in the region.

Of course, you can add to or omit any of these facts to make Saltmarsh fit your campaign. This chapter's details on NPC histories, locations, and deities come from the core D&D world of Greyhawk, but it's easy to change them. If your game uses the Forgotten Realms setting, Saltmarsh could be located along the Sword Coast, a few days south of Baldur's Gate, or it could be nestled on the shores of the Inner Sea, along the coast of Cormyr or Sembia.

In the Eberron setting, Saltmarsh could be a thriving fishing town somewhere along the coast of Khorvaire, and it could serve as a port of call for adventurers seeking passage to the ruin-haunted reaches of Xen'drik far to the south. Of course, if you set Saltmarsh in Greyhawk, some of the work has already been done for you; Saltmarsh is located in hex U4–123, on the southern coast of Keoland.

Saltmarsh (Large Town): Conventional; AL NG; 3,000 gp limit; Assets 577,500 gp; Population 3,850; Mixed (human 81%, halfling 5%, half-elf 4%, gnome 3%, elf 3%, dwarf 2%, half-orc 1%, other 1%).

NOTABLE NPCS

This section provides basic information about key NPCs in Saltmarsh, including their names, alignments, genders, races, classes, levels, and positions or roles in the town. Other details are left for you to create so you can customize the NPCs as needed for your particular campaign.

TOWN COUNCILORS

Egan Lassiter (NE male human aristocrat 4/cleric 10), noble and secret high priest of Vecna
Erolin Timertikos (NG male human aristocrat 6/fighter 3), Lord Mayor of Saltmarsh
Hoskin Lashti (NG male halfling bard 1/aristocrat 7), owner of the Silver Raven
Lira Tolivar (LN female halfling druid 8), keeper of the Saltmarsh Beacon
Lyra Ivessa (NG female human cleric 10), high priestess of Pelor
Toren Aerakin (LG male human aristocrat 6/wizard 1), noble

CITY WATCH AND MILITIA

Geolin (LN male dwarf fighter 4), commander of the town hall guards
Grust Redbeard (LN male half-orc warrior 11), warden of Saltmarsh Jail
Iborian Kelstinar (LN male half-elf ranger 6), commander of Hoolwatch Tower
Lars Tannerson (LG male human warrior 4), commander of Eastgate
Vera Orrenti (LG female human warrior 5), commander of Westgate
Walthas Kang (LN male human fighter 11), commander of the city watch
Others in City Watch: Ranger 6, barbarian 5 (2), fighter 5 (2), warrior 5 (5), ranger 3 (8), barbarian 2 (4), warrior 2 (4), barbarian 1 (6), warrior 1 (27)
Others in Militia: Expert 11, commoner 10, commoner 5 (2), expert 5 (2), commoner 2 (4), expert 2 (4), expert 1 (54), adept 1 (8), warrior 1 (116)

GUILD LEADERS

Abelard Larthe (LG male human expert 2), master of scriveners
Andrati Paterwalus (CG male human wizard 8), master of tinkers
Aydi Zarastian (CG female half-elf weretiger bard 11/duelist 2), mistress of entertainment
Diomar Lian (NG male human expert 1/wizard 4), master of alchemists
Dircroft Cronan (LE male human expert 3/rogue 3), master of tailors
Ebstilar Runail (LG male human expert 4/rogue 2), master of merchants
Jasker (NG male human expert 5), master of smiths
Jilar Kanklesten (NG male gnome expert 7), master of carpenters
Merrin Paskenfell (CG male human sorcerer 5), master of artisans and curator of Saltmarsh Museum
Mires Tithane (CE male gnome sorcerer 8), master of bakers
Molak Mako (LG male half-orc fighter 1/expert 3), master of shipwrights
Mylor Orvid (NG male human wizard 9), master of wizards' guild
Ned Shakeshaft (CE male human rogue 5/assassin 5), master of assassins' guild
Rodelik Karneth (LN male human expert 4/rogue 2), master of jewelers
Ryan Kirtap (CG male human expert 3), master of brewers
Sasha Amistar (CN female half-elf rogue 3/bard 7/arcane trickster 3), mistress of thieves' guild
Tarn Ticklip (CN male human commoner 3), master of dungsweepers
Yonshi Quansath (LE male human expert 4), master of stonemasons

RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Audry Lilybrook (CE female human adept 6), owner of Lilybrook Orphanage and cultist of Graz'zt
Emirat Rastenar (N male half-elf cleric 8), high priest of Boccob
Ferrin Kastilar (CN male halfling druid 4), high priest of Obad-Hai
Gerald Isslor (N male human cleric 8), high priest of Fharlanghn
Nestor Purilltan (CG male human fighter 2/cleric 7), high priest of Kord
Warale Essryn (NG male half-elf cleric 4), priest of Pelor

OTHER NOTABLE CITIZENS

Ankus Akalvin (CN male elf ranger 8), owner of the Drunken Urchin
Anmeh Ronakin (CG male human ranger 3), owner of Anmeh's Hall of Oddities

Baswulf Tisk (CN male gnome ranger 11), hired thug
Blahg (CE male dwarf rogue 5/sorcerer 1), owner of the Hoof 'n' Mouth
Daryn Larsken (LG male human fighter 6/duelist 5), owner of the School of Blades
Desthen Clorisal (NE male human wizard 4), con artist posing as sculptor
Ember (NG female gnome fighter 6/duelist 2), teacher at the School of Blades
Flanigan Lorsk (LN male human expert 4), owner of Whitecap Shipping
Jarthis Andrigal (LE male half-elf aristocrat 4), prisoner of Soshyn
Kailee Restinan (NG female elf ranger 8), owner of the Lizard's Boat
Katlen Lithoti (CN female aranea wizard 2), apprentice to Mylor Orvid
Kavern Lesk (N male human wizard 2), apprentice to Mylor Orvid
Kinto Anderhoff (NE male human rogue 2), Sawfish Boy and slaughterhouse worker
Klori (NG male human expert 1), missing member of carpenter's guild
Lankus Kurrid (CG male human fighter 4/expert 1), owner of the Wicker Goat
Loris Aeltyn (CG male human aristocrat 3), noble
Misha Larakti (NG female human expert 1/bard 4), owner of the Curio Shop
Moradni Mortai (LN male human wizard 2), apprentice to Mylor Orvid
Mylor Brank (NG male human wizard 5), owner of Saltmarsh Sendings
Nettie (CE female human adept 5), possessed lunatic
Noshi (LG male human monk 6), caretaker of Saltmarsh Cemetery
Oona Fastralli (LN female human expert 3/aristocrat 1), ruling noble
Oslor Pendicraw (N male human expert 4), "owner" of the Dancing Dryad
Parne Anderhoff (CE male human rogue 2), Sawfish Boy and slaughterhouse worker
Porthas (LG male human rogue 3/fighter 4/duelist 1), teacher at the School of Blades
Radric (NG male dwarf rogue 5), owner of Radric's General Store
Sara Rasivath (NG female halfling ranger 3/aristocrat 4), noble
Silark (NG male lizardfolk druid 5/bard 1), ambassador
Skie Rayncliff (N female human aristocrat 5/rogue 4), vengeful mistress
Soshyn Anamar (NE female human vampire cleric 12), haunter of the Andrigal Mansion
Tobias Ambermead (LN male human aristocrat 5), noble
Torkan Anderhoff (NE male human rogue 2), Sawfish Boy and slaughterhouse worker
Tyson Kashtilan (N male human cleric 1), missing priest of Boccob
Vander Anderhoff (LE male human rogue 2), Sawfish Boy and slaughterhouse worker
Vlistur (LE male doppelganger sorcerer 6), master of the Black Market
Other Citizens: Barbarian 10, barbarian 3 (5), barbarian 1 (3); bard 9, bard 4 (2), bard 2 (4), bard 1 (8); cleric 8, cleric 4 (2), cleric 3 (2), cleric 2 (4), cleric 1 (12); druid 4, druid 2 (2), druid 1 (4); fighter 3 (6), fighter 2 (4), fighter 1 (8); monk 6, monk 3 (2), monk 1 (4); paladin 5, paladin 2 (2), paladin 1 (4); ranger 1 (4); rogue 9, rogue 3 (4), rogue 2 (5), rogue 1 (8); sorcerer 4, sorcerer 2 (2), sorcerer 1 (4); wizard 7, wizard 3 (2), wizard 1 (4); adept 7, adept 3 (2), adept 2 (5), adept 1 (11); aristocrat 7, aristocrat 3 (2), aristocrat 1 (19); expert 1 (57); warrior 1 (55); commoner 1 (3,275)

LIFE IN SALTMARSH

Saltmarsh was founded 130 years ago by four adventurers who had cleared the area of a particularly brutal tribe of lizardfolk. Before they came, the area had consisted of just a few buildings, but the adventurers decided it was a fine place to retire and used their wealth to found the town of Saltmarsh. Over time, Saltmarsh grew slowly, eventually stabilizing at two thousand inhabitants strong for many years. Recently, pirates and slavers from the north sacked the nearby city of Seaton, and nearly a thousand refugees flooded the streets of Saltmarsh. At about the same time, several bands of adventurers finished dealing with a large sahuagin threat to the southwest, and the sudden influx of the vast treasures they had accumulated played a large part in the expansion of the town.

Today, Saltmarsh is on the verge of becoming a legitimate city. Many travelers have decided to settle here because the town is located in a prime position—not too far from civilization, but far enough that external politics and tax collectors rarely bother to make the journey. It is a town filled with possibility and ripe for exploration—a perfect place for adventurers to call home while they explore the trackless reaches of the lizardfolk-haunted Hool Marshes to the southwest, the mysterious reach of the Dreadwood to the northeast, or any of the wild frontiers that lie between.

Like most towns its size, Saltmarsh doesn't have an underground network of sewage tunnels. Rather, the streets are lined with gutters that, in theory, should funnel the city's waste down to the ocean or the Kingfisher River. Each day, laborers employed by the dungsweepers' guild gather and replace large barrels of garbage and other waste that have been placed on convenient street corners.

Saltmarsh is run by a town council of six elected individuals. The council meets in the town hall at the start of every

season, at which time they vote on issues and new laws and hear public grievances. In order for a motion or issue to be ratified, at least five votes must be cast in favor.

Chief among the council is Lord Mayor Timertikos (area 59). The position of lord mayor is assigned by popular vote of the other members of the town council; the position is for life, or until the rest of the council votes unanimously to impeach. Only the lord mayor can call emergency meetings of the council. His vote also counts as two when issues are on the floor during a council session and is often used to settle ties.

The other five members of the council also hold their positions for life, but they are nominated and elected by popular vote of the citizens of the town. Currently, the council members are Lady Lyra Ivessa (area 8), Lord Hoskin Lashti (area 42), Lord Toren Aerakin (area 54), Lord Egan Lassiter (area 57), and Lady Lira Tolivar (area 63).

EXPLORING SALTMARSH

The remainder of this chapter explores Saltmarsh in great detail. You can use it as described, or you can pick and choose buildings, NPCs, and adventure hooks for use in other cities.

Most of the locations include an adventure hook, but don't feel as if you need to use them all. They should serve as inspiration for your campaign. Choose the hooks you like, and ignore the rest. Although it's entirely plausible for a large town to offer enough intrigue for sixty or more opportunities for adventure, introducing too many can drown your players in options.

1. CITY WALL

Saltmarsh is surrounded by an extensive stone wall made of large blocks of limestone quarried from the cliffs south of town. The populace built the wall—which is unusually large for a town of Saltmarsh's size—only recently, when fears of attacks from nearby humanoid tribes took hold.

The layered wall actually consists of two 4-foot-thick, 20-foot-high walls about 15 feet apart. The space between them is filled with packed earth and then capped with a wooden roof. Guards patrol the top of the wall, walking along a 7-foot-wide trough in the center protected by a 3-foot-high rim that provides those in the trough with cover. Twelve square watchtowers (area 2) control access to the top of the wall.

It's difficult to forcibly gain entry to Saltmarsh by battering a hole in the wall. An attacker must first penetrate the outer wall, followed by the packed-earth interior, and finally the inner wall. Each 10-foot-wide section of city wall has the following statistics.

Stone Wall (Outer or Inner): 4 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 360; break DC 60; Climb DC 20.

Once the walls are breached, climbing over the 15 feet of packed earth lodged between the walls requires a DC 15 Climb check.

QUICK LOCATION REFERENCE

We don't want you to spend too much time flipping back and forth through this chapter, looking for the carpenters' guildhall, Frog Park, Crazy Nettie's place, or any other location that you know you read about but just can't find at the moment. Here's an alphabetical list of all sixty-five locations described in this chapter and where to find them.

Page		Page		Page	
147	Aeltyn Mansion (area 55)	146	Dungsweepers' Guildhall (area 51)	137	Saltmarsh Museum (area 38)
147	Aerakin Mansion (area 54)	147	Fastralli Mansion (area 53)	132	Saltmarsh Playhouse (area 24)
134	Alchemists' Guildhall (area 30)	133	Fishmongers' Warehouses (area 25)	152	Saltmarsh Point Forum (area 61)
148	Ambermead House (area 58)	145	Flounder Pounder, the (area 48)	126	Saltmarsh Sendings (area 6)
149	Andrigal Mansion (area 60)	131	Frog Park (area 21)	139	School of Blades, the (area 41)
135	Anmeh's Hall of Oddities (area 32)	133	Hoof 'n' Mouth, the (area 26)	129	Scriveners' Guildhall (area 15)
128	Anvil, the (area 13)	125	Hoolwatch Tower (area 4)	133	Shipyard (area 27)
129	Bakers' Guildhall (area 16)	128	Jewelers' Guildhall (area 14)	130	Shrine of Obad-Hai (area 20)
140	Barracks/Jail (area 43)	148	Lassiter House (area 57)	140	Silver Raven, the (area 42)
145	Black Market (area 49)	136	Leatherworkers' Guildhall (area 34)	142	Slaughterhouse (area 44)
130	Blue Frog Brewery (area 19)	143	Lilybrook Orphanage (area 46)	152	Standing Stones (area 64)
137	Bridges, major (area 36)	131	Lizard Embassy (area 22)	143	Stonemasons' Guildhall (area 45)
137	Bridges, minor (area 37)	130	Lizard's Boat, the (area 18)	131	Tailors' Guildhall (area 23)
128	Carpenters' Guildhall (area 11)	135	Market (area 31)	138	Temple of Boccob (area 39)
126	Cathedral of Kord (area 7)	136	Marshgate Bridge (area 35)	127	Temple of Fharlanghn (area 9)
127	Cathedral of Pelor (area 8)	129	Merchants' Guildhall (area 17)	149	Timertikos House (area 59)
124	City Gates (area 3)	152	Oak Island (area 63)	147	Tinkers' Guildhall (area 52)
122	City Wall (area 1)	152	Oak Island Keep (area 62)	139	Town Hall (area 40)
146	Crazy Nettie's Place (area 50)	128	Radric's General Store (area 12)	124	Watchtowers (area 2)
136	Curio Shop, the (area 33)	148	Rasivath Tower (area 56)	134	Whitecap Shipping (area 29)
143	Dancing Dryad, the (area 47)	152	Saltmarsh Beacon (area 65)	125	Wicker Goat, the (area 5)
134	Drunken Urchin, the (area 28)	127	Saltmarsh Cemetery (area 10)		

Saltmarsh
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swamp
swamp
Kingfisher River
Kingfisher River
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Scale in Feet
N

Illus. by B. Hagan

The town of Saltmarsh as seen from an approaching ship

Creatures: Patrols of guards (human warrior 1) walk along the walls at all times, although in times of peace, these patrols consist of only a single guard stationed between each watchtower. When the city raises the alarm, this number increases to three guards per wall section.

2. WATCHTOWERS

Twelve watchtowers provide additional defense to Saltmarsh's wall. The majority of these towers stand along the eastern portion of the wall, where the open country and swamps are notorious for hiding tribes of dangerous humanoids and bandits.

Each watchtower is made of stone and stands 30 feet in height. A single door provides access to the ground floor inside, which is split into three rooms: a holding cell, a small armory and storeroom, and a guard room. The upper floor holds a barracks for the guards posted at the tower and exits onto the city wall. The roof is armed with a single light catapult. A spiral staircase in the tower's center provides access to all three levels.

Creatures: Each watchtower has a contingent of three guards (human warrior 1), who live on the second floor and work in 8-hour shifts to patrol the roof and the nearby wall sections. These guards are recruited from the militia and are not part of the actual city watch. When necessary, they report directly to Lars Tannerson or Vera Orrenti at either city gate (area 3), or to Walthas Kang at the city barracks (area 43).

3. CITY GATES

Two gates, one at either end of the city, control land access to Saltmarsh. The townsfolk refer to them (simply enough) as Eastgate and Westgate. Each gate consists of a 60-foot-by-20-foot structure shaped roughly like a large "H"—a walkway over the road flanked by two towers. Each tower stands 40 feet in height, with the walkway bridging the two about halfway up. A large iron gate between the towers can be closed to control access to the city; the gates are left open during the day and locked at night.

Each tower consists of three internal floors and a roof armed with a heavy catapult. The ground floor of each tower has a guardroom, an office, and a holding cell. The second floor is mostly taken up by the machinery that opens and closes the massive iron gate. The third floor contains doors that allow access to the walkway above the gate, along with barracks for the guards stationed in the towers.

Saltmarsh lets most visitors into the city. As long as visitors can pay the entry tax or provide citizenry papers, the guards will let them in. A character can become a citizen of Saltmarsh at the town hall (area 40); noncitizens must pay a gate tax of 5 cp per individual. Merchant caravans

can gain entry to the town for a single caravan tax of 2 gp; this covers all members of the caravan as long as the merchants promise to do business in the town. No tax is charged for leaving the city.

In the case of unusual cohorts, mounts, familiars, or animal companions, the guards call upon their commander for assistance and make sure that the suspect creature is well behaved and under the responsibility of its group. A DC 15 Diplomacy check convinces the guards of this, at which point they charge a 1-gp exotic animal tax for each unusual creature granted entrance to the city. If the Diplomacy check succeeds by 15 or more (in other words, if the travelers make a DC 30 check), the guards agree to charge the standard entry tax of 5 cp per individual instead.

Obviously evil or dangerous creatures, such as undead and creatures of size Huge or larger, are flatly refused entry. If things begin to turn confrontational, four guards gather reinforcements from the watchtowers and alert the garrison.

Creatures: Each of the gates is staffed by a group of eight warriors (human warrior 1) recruited from the city militia. A warrior from the city watch commands each gate; Lars Tannerson oversees Eastgate, while Vera Orrenti runs Westgate. Both take their posts very seriously and don't suffer fools or horseplay among the guards or from anyone trying to gain access to the city when the gates are closed.

During the day, two sentries watch over each tower, and a third sentry stands guard on the ground to the right of the gates. The ground sentry collects taxes from those entering the city and provides direction and aid to visitors. The commanders remain in their offices on the ground floor unless summoned by the sentries.

4. HOOLWATCH TOWER

This looming watchtower stands an impressive 60 feet in height. Perched on the edge of a 50-foot cliff that plunges into the sea below, its location affords it a magnificent view of the sea and even the distant Hool Marshes about 8 miles to the southwest. The tower is made of stone, and its roof is armed with a single heavy catapult. Inside, the tower consists of four interior floors, each with roomy vaulted ceilings.

The ground floor serves as the primary storage and armory for the city wall, watchtowers, and gates. The second floor contains several offices and meeting rooms and includes an exit onto the top of the city wall. The third floor houses barracks for the guards stationed at Hoolwatch Tower, with far more bunks than guards to allow for overflow in times of crisis when additional militia members are mobilized. The top floor consists mostly of the personal quarters of the commander of Hoolwatch.

Creatures: An aloof ranger named Iborian Kelstinar commands Hoolwatch Tower. He caught the eye of the Saltmarsh city watch several years ago when he single-handedly defended a large merchant caravan from an attack by lizardfolk. His sound tactics and bravery earned him immediate acceptance into the guard, and he quickly gained his post at the then-just-completed tower. Over the past several years, the post has gone to Iborian's head, and he has become possessive of the position and impossible to satisfy. His staff of rangers and warriors finds it increasingly difficult to meet his demands, and the turnover of guards stationed here has begun to worry the town council. Still, no one denies that Iborian is good at his job, so for now, they overlook his attitude.

In addition to Iborian, three 3rd-level rangers and twelve 1st-level warriors are stationed here. At any one time, only a third of these forces remain in the tower. Iborian sends the others out on scouting missions in the nearby countryside, and in their off hours the guards tend to spend their time as far from Hoolwatch as they can get.

Adventure Hook: Iborian's attitude has made several enemies, some of whom are angry enough to approach the assassins' guild for solutions. The PCs could be hired by Iborian after an unsuccessful assassination attempt to find out who wants him killed.

5. THE WICKER GOAT

A drooping wicker goat hangs above the main entrance of this wooden building, its belly long since fallen into disrepair and allowing a family of pigeons to nest inside.

The Wicker Goat is one of the oldest buildings in Saltmarsh and is certainly its oldest tavern. Constructed nearly 120 years ago, the building has changed ownership no fewer than two dozen times. When first planning the city walls around Saltmarsh, the town council chose this building as the boundary for the eastern end. The location has resulted in booming business for the tavern, for it's literally the first building travelers from the east see upon entering the city.

Prices at the Wicker Goat are a bit high (125% of normal costs listed in the *Player's Handbook*). Generally, road-weary travelers don't mind, but the locals tend to prefer the taverns closer to the heart of the city. The Wicker Goat serves a wide variety of ale, mead, and even some wine, but notably doesn't sell any of Ryan Kirtap's ales (area 19), since the current owner still holds a grudge against Ryan for something neither man seems willing to talk about in public.

Creatures: The current owner of the Wicker Goat is a bear of a man named Lankus Kurrid. Nearly 6-1/2 feet tall, this muscular human spent much of his youth traveling from town to town and drinking at local establishments until he got in just enough trouble that moving on to the next town seemed the only option. Eventually, his habits earned him enough trouble that he fled his home nation of Furyondy and settled in Saltmarsh.

For many years, Lankus was one of the only locals to patronize the Wicker Goat regularly. He knew visitors stopped here often, and he lurked at the tavern to keep an eye on newcomers so he'd know if enemies from Furyondy

had come looking for him. None ever did, and his loyal patronage earned him the fast friendship of the prior owner, who, much to Lankus's surprise, left the deed to the tavern to him upon expiring a few years ago. Since then, Lankus has found that he quite enjoys running a tavern. He keeps meaning to change the name of the place and get rid of the creepy wicker goat out front but simply hasn't gotten around to it yet.

Adventure Hook: An unusual number of coins minted in Furyondy have recently cropped up in Saltmarsh, causing Lankus to worry that Furyondian agents have arrived in town and are searching for him. This worry might just be paranoia, but he's willing to pay trustworthy locals or patrons 200 gp (or more) for information about the source of these coins.

6. SALTMARSH SENDINGS

To send messages to distant locations, one visits Saltmarsh Sendings. The services offered in this brick building vary greatly, from simple letter delivery to *sending* spells. Saltmarsh Sendings does not ship cargo or other physical objects, but it does maintain good relations with Whitecap Shipping (area 29) and often refers its customers there for such needs. Written messages are the most popular services, but those who cannot write or would rather not have written evidence hire employees of Saltmarsh Sendings to memorize messages and deliver them orally.

Creatures: Saltmarsh Sendings was founded recently by a human wizard named Mylor Brank, who had grown frustrated with the logistics of keeping in touch with his family in distant Nyrond. Messages went missing as often as they were delivered. Finally, Mylor decided to do something about it, buying the deed to this lot and constructing a solid brick building. With Saltmarsh's growth, the message services he provides have proven quite popular, and he now subsidizes a large number of similar services in no fewer than five other cities.

While Mylor isn't of high enough level to cast *sending* himself, he maintains a good relationship with the nearby temple of Fharlanghn (area 9), whose clerics are pleased with his devotion (and donations) and keep him supplied with *wands of sending*.

Adventure Hook: Mylor sometimes receives requests to send messages into dangerous territory. In these cases, he hires adventurers to serve as guards for his messenger, paying them 50 gp per character level upon the group's safe return.

7. CATHEDRAL OF KORD

An 8-foot-high stone wall surrounds this stone building. The roofs are tiled in blood-red slate shingles, and the sides of the towering structure consist of massive pillars carved to resemble various styles of fighting men and women, each armed with a different weapon or performing a different feat of strength. As if these carvings weren't enough to indicate the building's purpose, a massive stone disc displaying the symbol of Kord is affixed over the twin oaken doors at the front of the cathedral.

Although the citizens of Saltmarsh observe a large number of religions, only a few have actual temples built within the city walls. The Cathedral of Kord is the second largest such temple, behind only the Cathedral of Pelor (area 8) in size and popularity. Kord's worshipers include fishers and laborers, as well as the majority of the town's guards.

The Cathedral of Kord is open to the public, holding services once per day at sunset. These services are little more than glorified fighting matches between locals, but sometimes traveling combatants from other cities come to pit their skills against resident heroes. The temple bells ring only in times of danger; they double as a citywide alarm, and their distinctive, thunderous peal has been sounded only a few times in Saltmarsh's history.

Creatures: The Cathedral of Kord is staffed by two 2nd-level clerics, two 1st-level clerics, and high priest Nestor Purilltan. Nestor has held that post for only a few short years, after the prior high priest was killed by an otyugh. The fighting sermons were Nestor's idea, and they have been singularly responsible for the sudden upswing of Kord's popularity in the town—the locals can't seem to get enough of the fights.

Adventure Hook: The temple always seeks new combatants for its "sermons." Combatants are expected to worship Kord, but otherwise the invitation is open to anyone who wants to try his luck. The mock battles, staged as entertainment, take place in a large underground fighting ring; the participants deal nonlethal damage and use no magic. Winners can expect not only monetary awards (usually 10 gp per character level for a match won) but also increased fame in Saltmarsh. A character who wins ten matches gains a +2 bonus on all Intimidate checks made against citizens of Saltmarsh.

8. CATHEDRAL OF PELOR

This impressive cathedral towers over the neighboring buildings, and indeed it might be the tallest structure in the town of Saltmarsh. It certainly presents one of the more impressive landmarks. The white stone walls of the cathedral rise nearly 100 feet into the air, and the large dome of red and orange metal atop the square structure adds another 50 feet to its height. The radiant golden symbol of Pelor adorns the walls of the structure, proclaiming its allegiance proudly and unmistakably. Yet despite its grandiose appearance, the building seems run down and even a bit dirty.

The faith of Pelor has traditionally been the most popular in Saltmarsh—a nonintrusive yet supportive religion that allows the locals to ply their trades and live their lives while providing spiritual guidance, advice, and healing as necessary. But recently, the church of Pelor has seen a

slow decrease in its faithful, and the cathedral struggles to maintain its high upkeep and staffing needs. The reasons for the church's financial problems stem somewhat from the rise in popularity of Kord's faith, but the number of new Kord worshipers alone cannot account for the decline of Pelor's faithful.

The cathedral itself is primarily one huge open space inside, consisting of a central pulpit surrounded by numerous pews. High windows keep the interior brightly lit during the day, and at night a massive holy symbol of Pelor suspended in the dome above radiates a number of *continual flames*. At dark, the glow of this symbol shines like a beacon through the metal dome, making it as much of a landmark at night as it is during the day. The ground floor contains personal quarters, storage, and other chambers, while the second floor holds the main worship area.

The cathedral sits within a walled compound that also serves as an infirmary of sorts for the city. Several sick houses line the eastern wall of the Pelor compound; ill and injured citizens convalesce here under the care of the church's priests. Until recently, this care was provided at very reasonable prices, but the hard times that have hit the church have forced the priests to charge more for their services.

Creatures: The Cathedral of Pelor is currently staffed by nine clerics, led by a charismatic but increasingly depressed woman named Lyra Ivessa. She can't explain the loss of the faithful; all of her attempts to recruit new worshipers have only managed to keep the congregation's numbers from dwindling even faster. She has had to release a dozen other clerics from service over the past several years in order to cut costs, and as a result, the cathedral feels empty and cold. All that remains here is Priest Warale Essryn, two 2nd-level human clerics, and six 1st-level human clerics.

Lyra Ivessa is also one of the six Saltmarsh councilors; see the description of the town hall (area 40) for more details.

Adventure Hook: Although the cathedral's diminishing resources mean that Lyra can't provide rewards, she currently seeks adventurers who she can trust with the truth. Lyra believes that Pelor's followers are being converted to a rival faith operating in the shadow of some other establishment. She has no clues where to start looking for this hidden cult, apart from having the PCs interview and investigate the lives of those who have left the flock, something she dreads doing since it could just as easily prevent potential returns.

Unfortunately, Lyra's fears are correct. An underground cult of demon worshipers (area 46), financed in part by another hidden cult (this one of Vecna), is growing in Saltmarsh and slowly converting worshipers of Pelor to its own faith for a terrible hidden agenda.

9. TEMPLE OF FHARLANGHN

This unassuming, one-story wooden structure seems somewhat out of place next to the two nearby walled compounds that surround extravagant cathedrals. But the wooden temple maintains a powerful and quiet dignity that might exceed the conspicuous display of wealth the other two exude. The symbol of Fharlanghn is carved into the front door of this structure and graces each of the stepping stones on the short walkway up to its front doors.

The temple doubles as an inn that welcomes people of all religious affiliations, as long as they respect the building and its divine patron. Religious icons appear throughout the temple but are kept subtle and unobtrusive in the majority of rooms. Rates are generally quite good (75% of the normal cost), but with the understanding that repeat visitors are expected to leave donations to make up the remainder (or more) of the cost.

Creatures: The Temple of Fharlanghn is tended by a human cleric named Gerald Isslor. He generally keeps a small staff of no more than three assistants, often travelers who wish to have somewhere to stay for a week before moving on to their next destination. Gerald maintains a strong friendship with Mylor Brank, the owner of Saltmarsh Sendings (area 6) and supplies the wizard with *wands of sending* in return for donations—and for news of developments in other cities.

Adventure Hook: Gerald belongs to a secret society known as the Seekers, a group of individuals dedicated to exploring the unknown. He uses his regular news reports from Mylor to keep abreast of adventuring opportunities in lands near and far, and when something catches his eye, he is quick to hire a group to investigate.

10. SALTMARSH CEMETERY

A wrought iron fence, its top adorned with a stylized pattern of leaves, surrounds a large section of the city. Within, rows of tombstones line winding paths between three low hills, atop which ornate stone crypts stand. Saltmarsh Cemetery is well maintained but receives visitors only rarely, except on days of funerals. The majority of those buried here are of the middle class; lower-class citizens of the city generally can't afford funerals and either pay for the cremation of their dearly departed or let the dungsweepers take care of them. The simple stone vaults belong to the lesser noble families of Saltmarsh, while the major families maintain personal crypts below their estates.

Creatures: An aged man named Noshi patrols and keeps Saltmarsh Cemetery. His incurable skin condition has cursed him with a shocking amount of body hair—a gift from half-orc ancestors. Noshi is quiet and rather self-conscious of his condition, and while he is a steadfast friend to a few, Saltmarsh denizens keep him at arm's length. Stories that Noshi is part fiend or part ape are popular among the crueler children, while adults believe persistent rumors that he's some sort of lycanthrope. Quite capable in a fight, Noshi won't hesitate to use force to keep the cemetery safe and undesecrated.

Adventure Hook: Despite regular rumors that undead plague the graveyard, the cemetery and Noshi are both just what they seem. Nevertheless, grave robbers do pose a problem. A group of thieves based in the slums has created a method of robbing the dead that is both ingenious and difficult to prevent: On nights after a burial, the three thieves steal out to the fresh grave and hammer a long, hollow metal tube into the grave and through the coffin's lid, using a *silence* spell from a wand to hide the sound. One of the thieves (a halfling) then uses a *wand of gaseous form* to float down through the tube and into the coffin, whereupon he resumes solid form to pluck anything valuable from the body before using the wand to resume gaseous form and escape. The tiny hole left in the earth is easily hidden. No one as yet suspects them, but any unscheduled exhumation brings the thefts to light and convinces both Noshi and the church of Pelor (area 8) to hire someone to track the thieves down.

11. CARPENTERS' GUILDHALL

This large wooden structure is both solidly and aesthetically built; every piece of timber seems to have been placed not only for structural reasons, but also to augment and enhance the grain and shape of those placed next to it. A sign above the entrance depicts a saw crossed with a hammer.

This cunningly constructed building is the carpenters' guildhall. Built entirely of wood, no nails or other fasteners hold the structure together, yet it is perhaps the most structurally sound building in town. It contains a large meeting hall, supply rooms, and numerous archives for blueprints, building techniques, and the like.

Creatures: The current guildmaster is a gnome by the name of Jilar Kanklesten, a gifted (if somewhat elitist) carpenter who's held the post for four decades.

Adventure Hook: A human named Klori, one of the guild's most promising new members, has gone missing after starting work on a new tavern near the river. Only his bloody and broken hammer remained behind. The guild has offered a 100-gp reward for information on Klori's location, and a 500-gp reward if he is found alive.

12. RADRIC'S GENERAL STORE

One of the oldest buildings in Saltmarsh, this large structure has been repaired countless times by countless owners, yet it remains at its core a general store. Simple weapons, adventuring gear, tools and skill kits, clothing, food, drink, and even gear for mounts and transport can be purchased here. Additionally, the proprietor runs a popular eatery and bar, and loyal customers always fill the large front porch (expanded three times in the last six years).

Creatures: Radric, a gregarious dwarf and retired rogue, spent much of his youth wandering the coastlines between the nearby city of Seaton and the Hool Marshes. Today, he's content running his general store and giving the locals somewhere comfortable to relax. Radric's long red hair is always kept neatly combed, as is his prodigious beard. He wears plain clothing but favors outrageous hats.

Adventure Hook: Not long before a disastrous fight with a black dragon in the Hool Marshes, Radric and his adventuring companions were searching the dangerous area for a remote monastery said to be built on a low hill long ago by the devotees of an obscure deity of bigotry and amphibians. He still owns the map that supposedly indicates the monastery's location as well as the fact that it is abandoned—except for a snakelike creature with a woman's head and her large stash of treasure. Although Radric never made it to the monastery, he's still curious to know if it exists and eagerly shows the map to anyone who seems capable of an extended foray into the swamp.

13. THE ANVIL

Half of this stone building is open to the air, exposing no fewer than a dozen well-equipped forges to observation by passersby on the nearby roads. A sign bearing the image of an anvil and the words "Guildhall of Smiths" hangs from a post at the street corner.

The Anvil is one of the more powerful guilds in Saltmarsh. Much of its work lies in providing harpoons, hooks, gaffs, and various components for the construction of ships and boats, but the smiths of Saltmarsh can build almost anything from metal, given enough time. The dozen open forges serve a dual purpose: They give guild members who have not yet established a forge of their own a place to ply their trade, and they serve as additional sources of income.

Creatures: The current guildmaster is a human smith named Jasker. He takes his position and job very seriously, while on all other topics he's a notorious joker and comedian.

Adventure Hook: Jasker has always wanted to work with mithral, but for various reasons he's never been able to procure enough to make anything of import. Recently, an offer for 20 pounds of mithral ore fell into his lap. He paid for the ore to be delivered to Saltmarsh, but the shipment is several days late. He can't afford to take time off to investigate, so he's looking for someone to backtrack along the delivery route to learn what happened.

14. JEWELERS' GUILDHALL

This squat stone building is fairly unassuming, and with cause. The jewelers' guild wanted its guildhall to be bland and dull, while at the same time difficult for a thief to penetrate. The resulting building is something of an eyesore, but its 2-foot-thick walls and *arcane locked* inner doors protect its valuable contents well.

Creatures: The guildmaster is a no-nonsense human named Rodelik Karneth. As a child, Rodelik spent much of his time on the streets, running with gangs of young cutpurses and thugs until being nabbed by a particularly

patient paladin he failed to rob. Rather than press charges, the paladin—a member of the Fastralli family (area 53)—agreed to let Rodelik go, provided that he apprenticed to one of Saltmarsh's guilds. Rodelik chose the jewelers' guild, and despite their initial doubts he quickly became one of the guild's most talented jewelers.

Adventure Hook: Although he has long since left behind his life of crime, that life has not left him. Rodelik's one-time fellow gang members were caught on their next job (due in no small part to his absence; they were underequipped for the task) and spent many years in prison. Two of them died, but the remaining six have recently been released, having had nearly a decade to nurse their grudges against their old friend.

15. SCRIVENERS' GUILDHALL

This wooden structure is gray with age, and it is evident from the street that its tightly shuttered windows are blocked on the inside by bookshelves. The scriveners' guildhall interior is a mazelike warren of bookshelves, with small desks wedged in wherever space is available. No natural light penetrates the winding halls, and each desk comes with a single everburning torch to provide illumination for the scribes.

Unlike the other guilds in Saltmarsh, the majority of this guild's members live at the hall. A number of small, cramped cells in the building's basement serve as sleeping quarters and the like. The scribes who live here are, for the most part, failed wizards and bards who didn't have what it took to make it elsewhere in town but didn't want to abandon their love of the written word. Saltmarsh's scholars hold the scriveners in disdain, yet if pressed they begrudgingly admit that the guild provides a valuable service in its preservation of books and preparation of public notices.

Creatures: The current guildmaster of scriveners is a stooped old man named Abelard Larthe. His eyesight is failing, so he no longer performs scribing duties; he's maintained his position more due to tradition than skill. Abelard's life goal was to establish a weekly paper for Saltmarsh, but his plans never came to fruition. A run-down man, he spends his days sitting in his favorite chair on the second floor, staring out the one unblocked window in the building.

Adventure Hook: A junior scrivener recently took on a job for a nobleman to copy a favorite book of poems. Halfway through the task, he noticed the back flyleaf coming loose, behind which the scrivener discovered a small hidden parchment. The paper bears a cryptic message written in a strange language that he has been unable to identify, but the message seems to be a numbered list of some sort, with the first three entries crossed out.

16. BAKERS' GUILDHALL

Each morning, crowds gather around this red brick structure, either drawn by the luscious smell of baked goods or to purchase the day's supply of bread. The guildhall itself is little more than a vast set of six kitchens, though typically only one is in use by the guildmaster, who tries new recipes daily. The bakers' guild often calls its members from their various bakeries throughout town to aid in making bread and pastries for festivals or large parties; at these times, all six kitchens see heavy use.

Creatures: The guildmaster of bakers is an energetic gnome named Mires Tithane. A fairly recent citizen of Saltmarsh, Mires moved here from the Kron Hills, and his skill at baking earned him a place in the guild by the end of the week. He rose through the ranks shockingly fast, and by the time he'd been a member for three months, he had become the guildmaster.

Adventure Hook: Mires has a secret—he's an accomplished sorcerer, and while his baking skills are indeed tremendous, his talent for intrigue is even greater. He used his Craft Wondrous Item feat to make baked goods infused with subtle magic, and with them, he magically influenced other members of the guild into aiding his rapid climb. Now that he's established himself as the head of the guild, he intends to sit back and relax.

Unfortunately, his rise to power wasn't entirely without bloodshed; two other members of the guild (both gnomes themselves) proved resistant to his enchanted baked goods and had to be taken care of in a more permanent manner. Their bodies still lie hidden in the guildhall, kept from spoiling with *gentle repose* spells while Mires slowly disposes of their corpses. Not coincidentally, he's making more and more money selling his wildly popular meat-patty scones.

17. MERCHANTS' GUILDHALL

This large three-story building is the cornerstone of Saltmarsh's mercantile pursuits, representing grocers, innkeepers, bartenders, farmers, and other miscellaneous shopkeepers who don't have their own guilds. As a result, the merchants' guild is one of the most powerful and richest in town.

The guildhall itself doubles as a moneylender and moneychanger. The guild makes initial loans at good rates (usually 10% interest, compounded monthly), with higher rates available for short-term loans. The guildhall rarely approves loans for more than 5,000 gp; arranging to borrow more requires a successful Diplomacy check (DC 10 + 1/100 × the desired loan's amount over 5,000 gp). These larger loans generally have 25% interest and are compounded seasonally (once every four months). On the other hand, the guild performs moneychanging services (such as converting coins from one value to another, or even to writs of credit good for any shop in Saltmarsh) free of charge in order to encourage more trade in town.

Creatures: Ebstilar Runail, a florid human who enjoys wearing loud and colorful clothing almost as much as he enjoys the pastries from the bakers' guildhall (area 16) across the street, is the current guildmaster of merchants.

He hopes to make enough money to buy his way into Saltmarsh's nobility someday, but until that comes to pass, he's content to be one of the town's richest men.

Treasure: The merchants' guildhall keeps a fair amount of money on hand in its underground vault, which is guarded by several traps and a stone golem. However, because the guildhall has a reputation for being robbed, Ebstilar has invested a fair portion of its funds elsewhere. The vault contains 15,000 cp, 15,000 sp, 15,000 gp, and 1,500 pp. Given 1d6 days, Ebstilar can cash in investments to generate an additional 35,000 gp.

Adventure Hook: The merchants' guild makes regular payments to the town's thieves' guild (area 47), so they needn't worry about local scoundrels. Still, the hall has been robbed more times than Ebstilar cares to admit, each time by visiting thieves. The latest criminal to set her eyes on the hall is the notorious Scarlet Thorn, whose antics have made her infamous in half a dozen cities along the coast. No one's sure who Scarlet Thorn is or what she looks like, but she's announced her intention to rob the merchants' guild before the season is out by sending her calling card, a bouquet of roses, to the hall. As a result, Ebstilar is frantically looking for an honest group of adventurers to help guard the building.

18. THE LIZARD'S BOAT

An intricate sign built to resemble a sailing ship that has caught on fire hangs above the main entrance to this tavern and inn. A half-dozen small lizards perch atop the sign. The lizards have learned that the tiny *continual flames* that appear to burn the ship's rigging attract the best moths. The locals consider the lizards good luck and often toss them insects or bits of meat to eat as they enter the tavern.

The Lizard's Boat is a fairly clean and comfortable establishment, popular with visitors and the middle class of Saltmarsh. Lizard motifs continue inside the tavern, with carved lizards on the bar and walls, and lizards painted on the dishes and tables. The tavern serves a wide range of alcohol (including Blue Frog Ale from the local brewery, area 19) and all manner of seafood and bread.

Creatures: The proprietor of the Lizard's Boat is Kailee Restinan, a one-time elven ranger who lost her left hand to an angry wyvern in the nearby Dreadwood several years ago. She's never been able to afford to have it regenerated, but she's made the best of the situation, taking over as proprietor for the tavern (and changing its name in the process) after she rescued the prior owner's children from slavers. Her animal companion, a monitor lizard named Sticktongue, serves as a mascot and bouncer for the tavern.

Adventure Hook: Kailee Restinan's affinity for lizards is in small part due to the fact that a lizardfolk druid named Krisharr rescued her from the wyvern that bit off her hand. She's formed a strong friendship with Krisharr and visits him at his hut in the Hool Marshes at least once a month. On a recent visit, she found his hut empty but saw no tracks nearby or any other clues. Her friend had simply vanished. Since then, she's spent all her spare time trying to track Krisharr down, and would certainly welcome any aid.

19. BLUE FROG BREWERY

This long stone building radiates the distinctive smell of fermenting alcohol. A highly detailed sign depicting a happily drunk blue frog dancing around an empty mug hangs over the front door, his equally blue tongue flopping around like a rope and about to tangle his feet.

This is the Blue Frog Brewery, known throughout the region for its most famous concoction, Blue Frog Ale. Flavored with sweet swamp blueberries, the ale turns the tongue blue and encourages throaty belches that sound like the croaking of a large frog. The brewery also makes several other types of ale, beer, and mead, but none have gained the notoriety of Blue Frog Ale.

Recently, the Blue Frog Brewery became the guildhouse for one of Saltmarsh's youngest guilds—the brewers' guild. Only a few members strong, the brewers have already established tiny breweries of their own in Saltmarsh.

Creatures: The owner of Blue Frog Brewery and the brewers' guildmaster is a jovial human named Ryan Kirtap. Middle-aged and balding, his laugh is nearly as infectious as his ale, and the only thing he enjoys more than having visitors is watching them get drunk on Blue Frog Ale and belching the night away.

Adventure Hook: Although Ryan obtains the majority of his berry supplies by paying locals to gather them in the small swamps to the north, he's heard stories of a variant of the swamp blueberry that grows to the southwest in the Hool Marshes. The problem, of course, is that the Hool Marshes are rather dangerous. He's keeping an eye out for adventurers and pays 50 gp a basket for Hool Marshes blueberries. Anyone who takes him up on his job offer might be dismayed to learn that Hool Marshes blueberries grow in the same places that are haunted by a group of will-o'-wisps and shambling mounds.

20. SHRINE OF OBAD-HAI

This serene wooden building located in Frog Park (area 21) is generally quiet and calm, receiving mild-mannered and introverted visitors in addition to worshipers of Obad-Hai. Of the recognized religious buildings of Saltmarsh, this shrine is the most unassuming and low-key of them all.

The majority of this structure is open to the air, a large pagoda with low benches surrounding a central platform. A two-story tower serves as the temple caretaker's home, and an enclosed set of rooms on the opposite side serve as storage.

Creatures: A halfling druid named Ferrin Kastilar, a morose individual in the later years of his life, tends to the

shrine. His animal companion is a particularly large bullfrog named Lorys. Ferrin has a special love of frogs, and the amphibious denizens of the park seem to appreciate him as well. More often than not, though, his calm attitude breaks at inopportune moments, and he flies into a frothing frenzy. His temper is legendary in Saltmarsh. More than once, he's lashed out at visitors with his spells, entangling people or even throwing fire at them for no apparent reason. So far, no one's been killed, and he always seems able to talk his way out of trouble with the city watch.

The druids of Ehlonna on Oak Island (area 63) worry that Ferrin's anger is a manifestation of something more dire, but they hate to meddle in another church's affairs and bide their time for now.

Adventure Hook: The druids of Oak Island are right; something dire does brew in Ferrin's mind. He's been receiving visions of a particularly cruel and hateful minor deity of bigotry and amphibians named Wastri, and the visions have played to this anger. It won't be long before Ferrin abandons the teachings of Obad-Hai and seeks an unhealthy and sinister alliance with the frog people of the Hool Marshes, an alliance that would spell trouble for Saltmarsh.

21. FROG PARK

Fir and pine trees dominate this sizable park, with a few willow trees growing near the park's marshy interior. The ground here has always been a bit sloshy, making it difficult to build structures. As a result, a cleric of Obad-Hai purchased the land for a great price, and druids of the deity have tended to the area ever since.

Frog Park derives its name from the large number of frogs that dwell here; on some nights, their susurrus can be heard all the way to the town market (area 31). Most people attribute the frog population to the park's proximity to the northern wetlands. Statues of frogs decorate the park, but most visitors find the place just too swampy.

Adventure Hook: A more sinister force draws frogs to this park. One of the frog statues is, in fact, an ancient likeness of Wastri, the Hopping Prophet and minor deity of bigotry and amphibians. Ferrin Kastilar, the current caretaker of the shrine of Obad-Hai (area 20), bought the statue from a shifty merchant several months ago, not recognizing its true nature. The statue serves as a focus for Wastri, who would like to extend his influence into the nearby Hool Marshes, and the evil deity has been using the statue to influence Ferrin. As long as the statue remains in its overgrown corner of the park, the menace it represents will only grow.

22. LIZARD EMBASSY

This large building of red brick appears to be quite new. Twin stone statues of noble-looking lizardfolk flank the main entrance.

Several years ago, the town of Saltmarsh nearly went to war with a large tribe of lizardfolk to the south. The war was averted by a band of heroes who discovered that the lizardfolk were building up arms to fight against a tribe of sahuagin. In order to prevent possible misunderstandings between the lizardfolk tribes of the Hool Marshes and Saltmarsh, the town council built this structure to serve as an embassy for the lizardfolk.

Much of the building is open to the skies, with large, swampy courtyards filled with vegetation and bathing pools used by the lizardfolk. Meeting rooms and barracks ring the courtyards, along with a kennel for the several monitor lizards kept here as guards.

Creatures: As the years roll by and memories of the menace posed by the sahuagin fade, the lizardfolk slowly lose interest in maintaining a presence in Saltmarsh. The majority of the citizens are only too happy to see this come to pass; while the lizardfolk have never caused any problems in town, they are nevertheless viewed with suspicion and fear.

Currently, only half a dozen lizardfolk and three monitor lizards reside in the embassy. One of the lizardfolk, an ancient diplomat named Silark, vividly remembers the terrible times of the sahuagin. He's doing his best to make sure that relations between Saltmarsh and the lizardfolk don't deteriorate further, but he's fighting a losing battle.

Adventure Hook: Any number of intolerant locals might spread rumors to the PCs that Silark and the lizardfolk are up to no good, prompting an investigation. Silark and his fellow lizardfolk harbor no ill intent, and their desire to maintain an open forum between Saltmarsh and the Hool Marshes tribes is nothing more than it seems. Nevertheless, the Lizard Embassy has more than its share of enemies, including the powerful Ambermead family. Lord Tobias Ambermead has been lobbying recently to have the embassy closed down, to little success. See the description of area 58 for details of his new plans for the lizardfolk.

23. TAILORS' GUILDHALL

This relatively small building looks even smaller sandwiched between the towering Saltmarsh Playhouse and the sprawling Lizard Embassy. Its whitewashed walls are clean and spotless, and a sign bearing an image of a bolt of cloth, a spool of thread, and a needle hangs above the front door.

The majority of the tailors' guildhall serves as a staging ground for imported cloth and a storehouse of supplies and finished goods for export. The demanding guild requires members to return at least a quarter of their output to the guildhall for export to other cities. In addition, guild dues have climbed slowly but steadily over the past several years. The members of the guild grumble and complain, but most of them have few other skills and lack enough money to move to another city. For now, they take the abuse and do what they can to make ends meet.

Creatures: An old native of Saltmarsh by the name of Dircroft Cronan, a thin, angular-faced man in his early sixties, runs the tailors' guild. Dircroft is a particularly difficult taskmaster, demanding nothing short of excellence and a quick turnover from his guildmembers. In return, he provides them with fine cloth and gear imported from distant regions. No one knows how Dircroft can get such large quantities of exotic cloth, but they appreciate the ready access to it.

Adventure Hook: Dircroft has a secret—he's at least partially responsible for the terrible attack on the nearby town of Seaton that took place years ago. Dircroft's involvement with a band of smugglers incidentally funded the attack; the smugglers might have had ties to an infamous organization of slavers from the north. When he found out about the attack, Dircroft severed all ties with the smugglers and had several of them assassinated by his ally Ned Shakeshaft (area 48). Today, Ned is the only resident of Saltmarsh who knows of Dircroft's involvement. He's blackmailing the tailor, which is the primary reason for the increased guild dues and the demands on its members; Dircroft has been selling their work and secretly claiming it as his own. But Ned might soon increase how much he's asking for his silence, at which point Dircroft might contact outside aid to help him deal with his one-time ally.

24. SALTMARSH PLAYHOUSE

This grandiose theater stands nearly three stories tall. Its façade features intricate carvings of famous characters from nearly a dozen well-known plays and operas (most of which the average working-class citizen of Saltmarsh would be hard pressed to place) and several characters from more lowbrow street-theater productions (about which the average upper-class citizen of Saltmarsh would be quick to feign ignorance).

A large, three-story auditorium fills the playhouse. The ground floor has low stone benches for seats and is open to anyone who can pay the entrance fee of 1 sp. Unfortunately, not all of the upraised stage is visible from this level. The middle floor has nicer seats and affords a good view of the stage; seats here cost 5 sp. The best seats in the house are the private booths that line the upper floor. Each holds up to six people and costs 10 gp per person.

A negotiation outside the Lizard Embassy threatens to erupt into violence

The Saltmarsh Playhouse keeps a fairly talented group of actors and entertainers on call, but the majority of the operas, concerts, and plays performed here are traveling acts. Shows take place three to four times a week.

The theater doubles as the guildhouse for Saltmarsh's entertainers' guild, a group of skilled performers and musicians who depend on one another for advertising and advice. An extensive underground level provides housing for guild members, and rumor holds that those who know the right passwords and have enough money can buy private "performances" with the guild's more talented members.

Creatures: The construction of this impressive building was financed almost entirely by guildmistress Aydi Zarastian, who made her fortune in the city of Greyhawk before retiring to Saltmarsh after her unique condition was unveiled during the premiere of a popular play. Aydi is an afflicted lycanthrope—a weretiger—but she's more or less in control of her animalistic nature. The citizens of Greyhawk nonetheless reacted poorly to the news and tried to imprison her for trial. She managed to escape but in the process left three of the watch dead, a deed that nags at her conscience to this day.

Adventure Hook: Aydi has so far managed to keep her true nature a secret in Saltmarsh, mostly by avoiding social events. But because her clients would love to have her entertain at their parties, this aloofness has spawned a fair number of rumors about her. In particular, Daryn Larsken, the founder of the School of Blades (area 41), has been intrigued by the mysterious beauty ever since he saw her display her fighting prowess as part of a performance. He might hire the PCs to spy on Aydi to learn more about her and find out if her modesty stems from a dedication to some other mysterious suitor.

25. FISHMONGERS' WAREHOUSES

The largest business in Saltmarsh is fishing, and the locals eat mostly seafood. This thriving industry is centered in the southeast section of the city, operating out of seven large warehouses where fishers sell their catch to workers who clean and prepare the fish and ship them to markets and restaurants in town. Each of the warehouses is run by one of seven established families of fishers, with the less affluent among them living in the press of the surrounding buildings. Fishing boats clog the piers, and traffic here is always congested at sunrise and sunset when the catch comes in.

This section of town also holds the profitable fishmongers' guild; each of the seven warehouses doubles as a guildhouse.

Adventure Hook: The fishers of Saltmarsh often find strange things in their nets, and those discoveries invariably end up in one of the warehouses, sold as oddities or items of potential value. Recently, Saltmarsh's fishers have found strange pieces of black coral in their nets. The coral matches no known nearby reef and melts within an hour of being brought to the surface unless stored in water. One fisher has discovered that a fish stored in a bucket with a chunk of the strange coral grows large, spiny, and particularly mean tempered. He has used this method for over a month to grow large fish and sell them at increased profit. He's careful to sell only the fillets, for the fish themselves are far too disturbing to risk revealing. What strange effects these fish might have on those who eat them remains to be seen.

26. THE HOOF 'N' MOUTH

This new building somehow manages to look run-down and decrepit. A sign above the door shows a grossly exaggerated satyr with one of his hoofed feet jammed into his mouth and an expression of shock and worry on his face. This is Saltmarsh's newest tavern, and in the span of only five months it has become a popular place for local fishers and sailors to relax.

The Hoof 'n' Mouth serves only the cheapest ale and grog, often watered down and usually in grimy mugs. The prices can't be beat, though, and, even with the diluted ale, this is the least costly place to get drunk in all of Saltmarsh—with the possible exception of some of the speakeasies in the slums. The tavern's specialty is a thick black ale that tastes like dirt but isn't quite as expensive as ingesting actual soil.

Creatures: The proprietor of the Hoof 'n' Mouth, an eccentric dwarf named Blahg, floated into the Saltmarsh harbor amid much fanfare on a ruined boat burned down to the waterline. Blahg had a *bag of holding* filled with gold and pearls, and he used the money to build the tavern and open it within a month of his arrival.

Adventure Hook: Blahg's primary problem is that he's a pyromaniac. He lit the fire that burned down his ship, and he was the only survivor. He's not completely insane and realizes that he needs to keep a low profile now, but he's already recruited a dozen locals into a fire cult dedicated to a deity he refers to as Infyrnus. The religion is fictitious, but Blahg's plans to burn down the Drunken Urchin (area 28) are not. He's just waiting for the right moment to put his competitor out of business for good.

27. SHIPYARD

One of the largest structures in town, this sprawling wooden building towers over the nearby houses. The shipyard serves as the guildhouse for the shipwrights' guild; here, members build almost all the needed fishing boats, merchant ships, and other vessels. The central wing contains administrative rooms, meeting rooms, supply rooms, and barracks for the local workers. The east wing is dedicated to the construction of fishing boats, while the west is dedicated to other types of ships. Two or three vessels are in progress in each wing at any one time. Once a ship is seaworthy, it is launched on one of several ramps that extend directly from the building itself.

Illus. by M. Phillippi

Creatures: The shipyard and shipwrights' guild is overseen by a gruff half-orc named Molak Mako, a hulking, tattooed figure who is nonetheless fair and honest in his trade. Molak came to Saltmarsh an orphan and was adopted by the kindly old man who ran the shipyard previously. When the man died, many tried to wrest control of the business from Molak, who had just become an adult, but no one could get the keys from the half-orc. Today, the locals deny such stories, having come to trust Molak and value his leadership.

Adventure Hook: Unknown to Molak, his adoptive father hid a small fortune in platinum coins under a floorboard in his bedroom. A group of thugs that refer to themselves as the Sawfish Boys (see area 44) suspect the existence of this stash and plan to rob it. If they succeed, Molak might hire the PCs to track down what was stolen from the mysterious hole he finds in the floor of his bedroom.

28. THE DRUNKEN URCHIN

This seedy-looking, run-down building houses a popular tavern that caters mostly to fishers and traveling merchants from the nearby marketplace. Despite its tired appearance, the tavern is actually one of the busiest in town.

The Drunken Urchin is infamous throughout Saltmarsh for its house special, urchin wine. A huge sign above the bar shows a sea urchin floating in a large glass of red wine as a particularly pleased man drinks from it. This concoction is rather foul, but the locals get a big kick out of tricking visitors into trying it. Urchin wine is little more than a large glass of cheap wine in which floats a small sea urchin that has been plucked from the aquarium behind the bar, crushed, and dropped into the glass. If a character manages to drink the entire glass of wine (and keep it down), the rest of the night's drinks for that person are on the house. The nauseating texture and flavor of urchin wine requires that the drinker make a DC 22 Fortitude save to resist becoming ill for 2d4 rounds (and subsequently losing the opportunity for free drinks).

Creatures: A crusty old salt named Ankus Akalvin runs the Drunken Urchin. He's owned the tavern for his entire life and runs the dive with pride. Nothing entertains him more than seeing new blood try to choke down a glass of urchin wine, with the possible exception of seeing his new competitor Blahg lose business.

Adventure Hook: The tavern's bustling business has dropped off a bit, and Ankus knows why—the new establishment a few blocks to the north known as the Hoof 'n' Mouth (area 26). Ankus and Blahg share a not-too-friendly sense of competition, and the two tavernkeepers wage a slowly escalating war of propaganda and sabotage that might soon end in bloodshed. Currently, Ankus plans to hire adventurers to visit the Hoof 'n' Mouth to cause trouble, break things, and spread unflattering rumors about Blahg and his method of preparing drinks.

29. WHITECAP SHIPPING

This long building controls the majority of import trade that comes through Saltmarsh. All visiting merchant ships must sign in their cargo here before they can offload their goods or sell their wares in the market. Whitecap Shipping also controls much of the land-based trade in town.

Creatures: Owner and operator Flanigan Lorsk, a childhood friend of Erolin Timertikos (the current lord mayor of Saltmarsh), is one of the most powerful people in town. Although Flanigan doesn't hold a seat on the town council, most council members seek his advice on important matters; his wisdom and long-standing residency afford him such an enviable position. His only real vice is the Dancing Dryad (area 47), where he usually spends two or three nights each week with one of his many favorite companions.

Flanigan owns three fast coasters and hires them out to anyone who needs to ship goods north or south along the coast. Shipment of cargo generally costs 1 gp per pound, or 1 sp per pound for quantities of over 1,000 pounds.

Adventure Hook: Flanigan is a notorious womanizer, and his list of ex-girlfriends reads like a directory. As a result, most women in Saltmarsh avoid him in private, but they don't speak ill of him publicly due to his close friendship with the lord mayor. If one of the PCs is female, Flanigan might attempt to start a relationship with her, showering her with attention and weekly gifts (typically, items of jewelry worth 50 gp or so) until she either gives in to his "affections" or makes it clear that she doesn't want his companionship.

30. ALCHEMISTS' GUILDHALL

This three-story tower looks even taller as a result of the wooden pilings on which it's built. The top of the tower is a rounded dome, and strange lights and colored smoke often flash and drift from its high windows. A sign above the main entrance depicts three bubbling potions.

This is the alchemists' guild, a rich but fairly small guild associated not only with the creation and sale of alchemical items, but also with the sale of magic potions brewed at the temple of Boccob (area 39). The locals are a little nervous about the lights and smoke that seep from the tower's heights, but they swallow this fear readily enough when they need alchemical supplies or potions.

Creatures: A rail-thin, bald human named Diomar Lian oversees the guild. He and his two apprentices are its only members, since he's loath to let anyone else into his confidence. The strange lights and smoke are part of his security plan—they're nothing more than permanent *silent images* and *dancing lights* that give the place a sinister reputation and help to keep thieves away.

Adventure Hook: Diomar periodically needs new supplies that aren't readily accessible in town. His knowledge of nature is quite prodigious, though, and with a few hours of research, he can usually find a local plant or animal

product that can serve. He commonly hires adventurers to travel to the Hool Marshes or the Dreadwood to gather these supplies. He pays handsomely, often up to 100 gp per successful delivery.

31. MARKET

This long strip of open land is Saltmarsh's primary marketplace. Most merchants in town can't afford a storefront, so they rent spaces and tents here from the merchants' guild to ply their trades. Player characters simply looking for food, supplies, and other miscellaneous purchases can find what they need here. The only permanent structures in this area are a large fountain built to resemble a massive mermaid lifting a ship into the air, and an open pagoda used by local ranchers to sell horses and other livestock.

Adventure Hook: Every noon, during high market, the crowds here swell as merchants hawk their wares. Members of the city watch patrol the place fairly often, but it's still a favorite haunt for pickpockets, who try to target obvious visitors to town rather than locals. If a character notices a pickpocket attempt, chances are the thief is an urchin in the employ of the dungsweepers (see area 51) and, if caught, might lead the PCs on a frantic chase all the way back to the guildhall.

32. ANMEH'S HALL OF ODDITIES

The façade of this building is covered with dozens of posters, many in tatters or out of date, depicting strange freaks of nature, monsters, and bizarre relics with catchphrases such as "See the Wondrous Eel-Man!" and "Behold Nature's Cruelest Trick: The Toad-Faced Dog!" and "Test Your Endurance in the Pit of Vile Ooze!" A huge sign over the main entrance proudly proclaims the place to be Anmeh's Hall of Oddities; the sign flickers with a permanent *faerie fire*.

This place is just what it seems—a freak show and museum that caters to the exotic and unusual. Entrance costs only 1 sp, or 1 gp for the "honored guest tour," a guided tour of the museum by Anmeh himself that includes access to the "secret exhibits." These are usually a handful of upcoming displays that the rich can pay to see early.

Anmeh pulls back the curtain, and onlookers are shocked at the contents of the cage

Illus. by R. Spencer

Creatures: The Hall of Oddities is the brainchild of Anmeh Ronakin, a retired ranger from a distant land who has long understood that people love to gawk at freaks. His wide travels exposed him to dozens, if not hundreds, of unique cultures and locations, and he draws upon this knowledge to keep his exhibits fresh and entertaining. The exhibits are fairly static—stuffed monsters, unusual objects such as shrunken heads and troglodyte religious icons, and dioramas of some of the world's more notorious and strange locations. Anmeh also tries to keep at least two or three live exhibits at a time, which often consist of fairly small creatures such as stirges, chokers, deformed kobolds, or more exotic specimens. Rarely, he keeps something larger, such as a carrion crawler or an owlbear.

Adventure Hook: Because many of his live exhibits are dangerous creatures, Anmeh takes great care to keep them secured. Unfortunately, one of his more recent "acquisitions" turned out to be an ettercap egg that Anmeh incorrectly identified as a spider egg. The egg hatched early, and the ettercap got out and escaped into the city. Anmeh hopes that it died, but recent rumors of a deformed man who has been menacing people in the slums have given him reason to worry.

33. THE CURIO SHOP

This shop always seems to be surrounded by curious smells, and an inordinate number of crows lurk on its eaves and gutters. A sign above the door depicts a quasit breaking a wand over a horned skull, and an evil spirit of some sort rises up from the shattered end of the wand.

The Curio Shop is one of three places in Saltmarsh that regularly traffics in magic items (the other two being the Temple of Boccob [area 39] and the Black Market [area 49]). The cluttered shop is filled with strange items; spell components and alchemical items on consignment from the alchemists' guild (area 30) can be found for sale here as well.

Misha Larakti, the owner, always has magic items in stock if they are worth less than 3,000 gp, although her stock of items that cost 1,000 gp or more is generally limited to 1d3. She typically receives new stock once per month. Occasionally, she stocks items worth as much as 6,000 gp, but they tend to sell quickly. Currently, her only overpriced item in stock is a pair of *gloves of Dexterity* +2. Each month, there's a flat 5% chance that she gets a new overpriced item in stock. (Determine the item randomly, but it must be a minor wondrous item worth no more than 6,000 gp.) These overpriced items invariably sell to itinerant adventurers rather than town residents.

Creatures: Misha is a no-nonsense, middle-aged human. She's always on the lookout for new magic to buy, and because she's a member of the merchants' guild, Saltmarsh's shop owners are only too happy to send business her way.

Misha's shop is one of the more tempting targets for thievery in town, with its fairly large supply of portable wealth. Fortunately, in her last adventure before she retired, Misha rescued a silver dragon wyrmling from a tribe of ogres. The dragon, Taaliax, promised to repay Misha by serving as her guardian until the day she dies. Now a very young silver dragon, Taaliax spends her time in the form of a large guard dog that sleeps near the fireplace, but she is quick to respond to any perceived threat to the store or to Misha.

Adventure Hook: Prices are high enough at the temple of Boccob (area 39) that Misha doesn't worry about the competition, but the Black Market (area 49) has been a thorn in her side for years. Since they don't pay taxes or fees and don't mind restocking their supplies with stolen property, it's difficult for Misha to remain competitive. If she could get proof of the Black Market's location, she could go to the town council and ask that it be shut down. She's willing to reward any PCs who bring her this information with 2,000 gp and a lifetime 20% discount on items purchased in her store.

34. LEATHERWORKERS' GUILDHALL

This old building sags in the middle, its walls slowly rotting and its pilings sinking into the inexorable flow of the river below. A half-ruined sign still hangs askew over the boarded-up door, but the picture has long since worn away.

This was once the guildhall of leatherworkers, but several years ago its guildmaster, Kiorn Kester, was revealed to be in league with a band of slavers based on a farm to the west of town. After a very public trial, Kiorn was judged guilty and executed. When no heir came forth, the city dispensed of his belongings but couldn't find the deed to the guildhall. As a result, it reverted to the city, but the council has neither the time nor the resources to rebuild the guild. The remaining leatherworkers in town joined the merchants' guild instead, and this building now rots away into the river.

Adventure Hook: The truth of the matter remains hidden in the ruined structure, in a secret closet where Kiorn kept the deed to the building along with his journals and life savings. Finding the secret closet is difficult (Search DC 26), but the journals within prove that Kiorn was framed. Further, the journals seem to indicate that at least three other merchants in Saltmarsh had ties to the slavers. While the books don't provide any names, one of the entries indicates that one of these corrupt merchants was a tailor. Two of the unknown merchants have since left Saltmarsh, but the third—Dircroft Cronan, master of the tailors' guild (area 23)—still lives in town. If he were to learn of the journals, he'd spare no expense to obtain and destroy them.

35. MARSHGATE BRIDGE

Marshgate Bridge is a covered bridge made of stone with a slate-shingle roof. Its walls are carved with reptilian gargoyles, and a short watchtower at the east end affords an excellent view of the swamps to the north. The interior of the bridge is lined with numerous alcoves, each with a narrow

window that offers a view of the marshes or the city. Young lovers often rendezvous in the alcoves late at night, and the town guards turn a blind eye to their activities.

Adventure Hook: The guards' tendency to overlook nocturnal goings-on has proven to be a boon for one of Saltmarsh's most dangerous predators, the denizen of the old Andrigal Mansion (area 60)—the vampire Soshyn Anamar. Late at night, she lures victims to the bridge, almost always lone visitors to the city that no one would miss. Because she comes and goes in gaseous form (bringing the body of her latest victim with her to dispose of later in her lair), the guards have no idea that such dire predation is occurring on an almost weekly basis right under their noses. Soshyn might target one of the PCs as a victim if she thinks the character is alone, or she might target someone the PCs are hoping to meet in town.

36. MAJOR BRIDGES

Two large wooden bridges span the Kingfisher River in Saltmarsh, each wide enough for two carriages to pass abreast. The northernmost bridge is called Anwyn Bridge, after one of the founders of Saltmarsh. The southernmost one is named Sharkfin Bridge due to its distinctive triangular supports.

37. MINOR BRIDGES

Two smaller bridges cross the Kingfisher River as well. Each is wide enough for a single horse but generally sees only foot traffic. The eastern bridge is known as Market Bridge, and the western one is called Barnacle Bridge due to its thickly encrusted pilings.

38. SALTMARSH MUSEUM

This huge building is made of white marble. Numerous carved pillars support open courtyards, and the façade is wreathed with intricate carvings. A wrought-iron gate controls access to the building proper; it hangs open during the day but is closed at night. "Saltmarsh Museum" is carved into the stone above the entrance.

This large structure is more than a museum of art and sculpture. It also serves as the guildhouse for the artisans' guild, an organization that is closely allied to both the temple of Boccob (area 39) and the Saltmarsh Playhouse (area 24). Unlike most museums, everything on display here is for sale—for the right price. Most of the objects sell for around 100 gp, but some approach Saltmarsh's limit of 3,000 gp. Anyone who merely wants to wander the display wings of the museum can do so for the bargain price of 1 gp.

Creatures: The Saltmarsh Museum's curator (and the artisans' guildmaster) is a pleasant old human named Merrin Paskenfell. He's always on the lookout for new talent, and a character who proves his skills to the old man finds him a supportive and helpful patron.

The Saltmarsh Museum might sound like a tempting target for thieves, but Merrin has spared no expense in making it a gauntlet. Regular patrols of hired guards (human fighter 3) watch the building day and night, and the gates and doors are protected by *arcane locks* placed by Merrin himself (though he keeps the doors and gates open during public hours). Numerous other magic traps, including *alarms*, *sepia snake sigils*, and *glyphs of warding* placed by clerics of Boccob, guard the displays, and the most valuable works are kept in a massive vault in the center of the main building. Finally, Merrin recently secured the use of a shield guardian to augment the museum's defenses. Nevertheless, Merrin secretly pays the Saltmarsh thieves' guild a monthly fee of protection money to ensure that no local criminals try their hand at robbing the place.

Adventure Hook: One of Merrin's prized artisans, the human sculptor Desthen Clorisal, is a con artist. Using scrolls of *flesh to stone* purchased from the Black Market

Soshyn the vampire claims another victim in the ruins of Andrigal Mansion (see area 60)

Illus. by V. Rams

Illus. by B. Hagan

The Temple of Boccob dominates the Saltmarsh skyline

(area 49), Desthen has been capturing animals and minor monsters from the nearby wilderness and transforming them into statues that he passes off as his own work. With a DC 26 Spellcraft check, someone can recognize that the statues were created by *flesh to stone*, but because Merrin has no ranks in this skill and the statues sell quickly, no one's noticed the deception—that is, *almost* no one. Tyson Kashtilan, a lay priest of Boccob, realized what was going on when he saw one of Desthen's statues on display. Tyson confronted Desthen, but the wizard used one of his scrolls on the cleric. Tyson's been missing for several months now, and Desthen has been wary about creating new statues. He hopes to arrange for the statue of Tyson to be sold to a visiting collector through the Black Market, but until he can seal the deal in a few more weeks, the petrified cleric remains hidden in the basement of Desthen's modest home.

39. TEMPLE OF BOCCOB

Until very recently, this site was the location of Saltmarsh's underfunded library. A few years ago, a local adventuring cleric of Boccob bought the library and had it torn down and rebuilt as a temple devoted to his deity. Today, the Temple of Boccob is perhaps the most unique and recognizable structure in all of Saltmarsh.

Built like a pyramid, the temple is capped with a large dome surrounded by glass towers. A large, five-story tower of pale blue marble dominates the eastern face of the pyramid. At night, the entire structure shimmers with countless *continual flames*, and a massive glowing symbol of Boccob slowly rotates above the central dome's peak. The entire display is both awesome and ostentatious. Clerics of the other temples in town (particularly Lyra Ivessa of the Cathedral of Pelor, area 8) find the display tasteless and embarrassing, but the structure has found its way into the hearts of the town's less religious denizens.

The Temple of Boccob serves several functions in Saltmarsh. First and foremost, it is a place of worship. The books from the old town library are kept here as well, although only the faithful can peruse the stacks without paying a 1 gp fee. The temple also serves as the guildhouse for the local mages' guild, which is located in the blue marble tower and connects to the main temple by a short stone passage. The wizards of the guild point out that membership is open to anyone of any faith, but those who don't worship Boccob find the guild to be somewhat uncomfortable and awkward.

Finally, the temple is one of the few places in town that regularly sells magic items. Unlike the Black Market (area 49) and the Curio Shop (area 33), the majority of the goods sold here are crafted on-site by the wizards or clerics. The

magic shop generally has anything in stock that one could ask for, up to the town's limit of 3,000 gp. However, items that cost over 2,000 gp are in limited supply; typically, only 1d3 are available each month.

Creatures: The Temple of Boccob is staffed by seven clerics: four 1st-level acolytes, two 3rd-level priests, and Emirat Rastenar, the town's current high priest of Boccob. Emirat is a serious half-elf; none of his underlings can say they've ever seen him laugh, much less smile. He tends to let the other clerics do as they will, but if any of them violate his unspoken rules, he gives them little room for explanation. The clerics of Boccob understand that if they're not wise enough to know right from wrong, they shouldn't be here and thus don't begrudge Emirat for his uncaring mentorship.

Another important denizen of this complex is Mylor Orvid, the highest-level wizard in Saltmarsh and master of the wizards' guild. Mylor and his three apprentices (see the Adventure Hook below) rarely leave the tower that serves as their guildhouse, relying on one of six halfling servants (all 1st-level commoners) to resupply food stores and take care of other mundane matters. Mylor often spends weeks on end building magic items. Once or twice a year, he heads out alone into the Dreadwood to compare discoveries and creations with the elven wizards who live there; they often go hunting for exotic spell components together.

Adventure Hook: Unknown to Mylor and his two human apprentices, the third—a homely young woman named Katlen Lithoti who seems to be an ace at wizardry—is actually a 2nd-level wizard aranea in human form. Katlen grew dissatisfied with life with the other aranea in the deep Dreadwood, and she tricked Mylor into thinking she was an orphaned wizard who had become lost in the woods. Taking pity on her, Mylor brought her back to the guildhouse and has been nothing but pleased with her progress as a wizard. The other two apprentices, Kavern Lesk and Moradni Mortai, have grown jealous of the attention Katlen receives and might try to frame her for stealing supplies or scrolls. If they do, the plan backfires, and Katlen might be forced to kill one or both of them and hide the bodies.

40. TOWN HALL

This long brick building is kept in fantastic repair. A central dome is flanked by twin wings of offices, records rooms, and storerooms. The central room serves as an audience chamber where the town council holds its government meetings, which are open to the public. However, the guards don't admit just anyone—it takes a DC 20 Diplomacy check to gain entrance when the council is in session.

When the council isn't meeting, various clerks and scribes work here, copying legal texts, researching problems, and crunching numbers for the council. If the PCs wish to become citizens of Saltmarsh, they must apply here and then wait for two weeks while the council goes over their resumes and submitted histories. The PCs can earn citizenship as long as they demonstrate marketable skills (and have at least 4 ranks in a Craft, Perform, or Profession skill) or seem to be capable of aiding in the town's defense (and have at least two character levels in a PC class). The council won't allow obvious criminals or ruffians to become citizens; a character who qualifies for this description can fool the council with a successful Bluff check opposed by the council's collective Sense Motive +10. All applications for citizenship require a filing fee of 10 gp, which can be waived for any applicant who makes a DC 25 Diplomacy check.

A citizen of Saltmarsh enjoys several benefits.

- He can run a business and own property in the city.
- He no longer has to pay tolls when entering the city.
- He receives a vote at times when the council puts legislation up for a public vote.

Citizenship might have other benefits in your campaign as you see fit; perhaps the guilds of Saltmarsh only allow citizens to join, for example.

Creatures: In addition to the two dozen scribes and servants who work and live here (all either 1st-level experts or commoners), a patrol of six guards (all 1st-level warriors) are stationed here. These guards are commanded by a retired dwarf adventurer named Geolin, who dresses impeccably and does not suffer tomfoolery in the hall.

You can find details on the town council and how it operates on page 121.

Adventure Hook: If the PCs make a name for themselves in Saltmarsh as heroes or adventurers, it's only a matter of time before the town council asks to meet with them. By the time the PCs reach 3rd level, they'll have attracted enough attention that they receive a summons to the next council meeting. The councilors merely wish to appraise their personalities and plans to make sure that they have Saltmarsh's best interests at heart. If the meeting goes well, the councilors might call upon the heroes at a later date to perform services for the city.

41. THE SCHOOL OF BLADES

This walled compound houses a large, one-story structure of wood that surrounds an open courtyard. The gates to this compound are generally closed and guarded, though that's more for show than anything else.

This is the infamous School of Blades, a fighting school founded nearly a decade ago. Its instructors teach an acrobatic style that focuses on the use of light weapons and mobility—in short, they train duelists.

Membership at the School of Blades is by invitation only. Generally, about a dozen students are enrolled at any one time, each having been recruited by the school's founder or one of his two aides. The trio keeps a close eye on anyone in town whose fighting style might be augmented by their

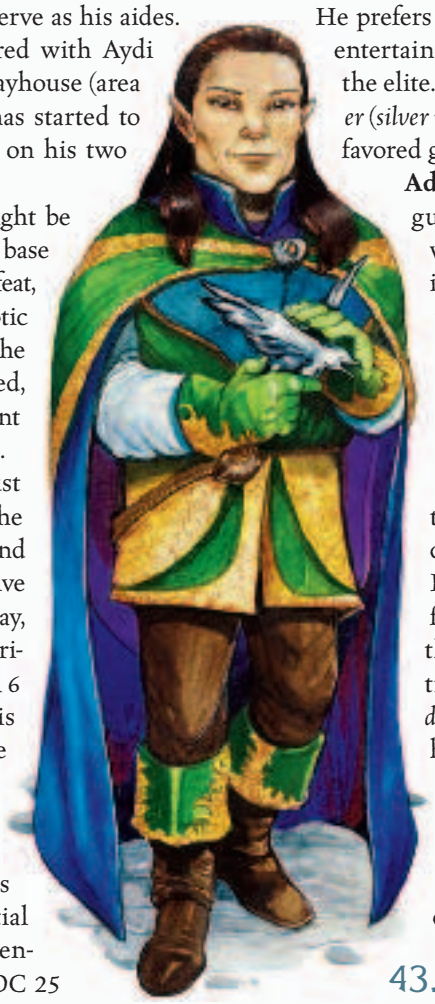
lessons; likewise, the town's nobles and guildmasters can recommend possible students.

Creatures: Daryn Larsken, a human duelist from the distant town of Verbobonc, founded the School of Blades nearly ten years ago. Since then, he has tutored hundreds of students, but only three dozen have graduated and become duelists; his courses are notoriously difficult. Two of his graduates, a female gnome named Ember and a human named Porthas, currently serve as his aides. Daryn has recently become enamored with Aydi Zarastian, the owner of Saltmarsh Playhouse (area 24), to an extent that his teaching has started to suffer, and he relies more and more on his two aides to lead classes.

Adventure Hook: A character might be invited to join the school if he has a base attack bonus of +1, the Weapon Finesse feat, proficiency with a light martial or exotic melee weapon, and at least 4 ranks in the Tumble skill. An invitation, once offered, is never repeated; a prospective student typically has a day to accept or decline.

Once a student is accepted, he must move into the on-site barracks, pay the tuition of 500 gp per six-month term, and attend at least 8 hours of classes a day, five days a week. At the end of each 8-hour day, the student is fatigued and gains experience points as if he had defeated a CR 6 monster. A student who commits to his studies can earn enough experience points to become a duelist as early as five years after he first enrolls.

Daryn understands that some of his students are also adventurers. As long as they fight only with light martial or exotic melee weapons while adventuring, and as long as they make a DC 25 Diplomacy check, Daryn allows them to practice only four days a week, leaving them three days a week in which to adventure.



Hoskin Lashti, owner of the Silver Raven

Illus. by G. Kubic

42. THE SILVER RAVEN

Much of the façade and tiled roof of this marble building is coated with silver paint. Silver embellishments, often in the shape of ravens, adorn the structure, and an exquisite silver statuette of a raven perches on a silver bar above the main entrance. This gaudy establishment is the Silver Raven, Saltmarsh's most prestigious tavern and inn.

Its food and ale are of excellent quality but expensive, costing ten times the amount listed in the *Player's Handbook*. The proprietor even keeps a small set of five scrolls of *heroes' feast* handy for special occasions; partaking of such a feast costs a mere 80 gp per person. All rooms are actually suites of three—a sitting room, a bedroom, and a private bathroom. These suites cost 10 gp per night and include breakfast, a massage, a hot bath, and laundry services. Each room can be secured with a good lock (Open Lock DC 30).

Creatures: This fabulous establishment is owned and operated by Hoskin Lashti, a pleasant halfling who also happens to be one of the councilors of Saltmarsh. Of the six councilors, he is perhaps the least invested in the role. He prefers to spend his time at his establishment, entertaining the guests and rubbing elbows with the elite. Hoskin owns a *figurine of wondrous power (silver raven)* that he has been known to loan to favored guests on occasion.

Adventure Hook: One of Hoskin's recent guests was Kombi Opaltooth, a traveling wizard who paid for his room for a month in advance, explaining that he needed privacy to copy several new spells into his spellbook. But unbeknownst to Hoskin, Kombi was murdered in his room and his spellbook stolen. The body won't be found until it begins to smell several days after the murder, but the crime appears to be a mystery because the room's door remains locked. In truth, Kombi stole the rare spells from a reclusive conjurer who lives in the nearby Dreadwood. The conjurer tracked him down and used *dimension door* and *phantasmal killer* spells to retrieve his property. Finding the murderer is a task for PCs with skills in unraveling mysteries that leave behind no conventional clues; spells such as *speak with dead* and *divination* are required to crack this case.

43. BARRACKS/JAIL

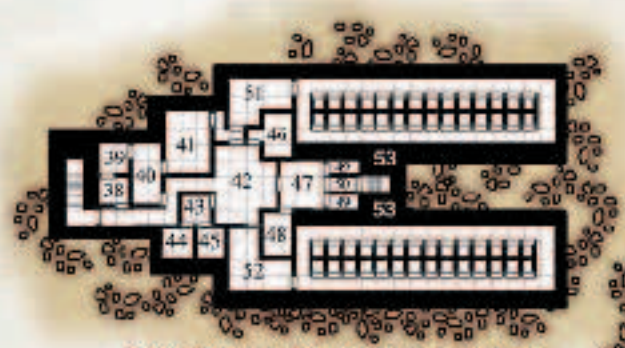
This grim, foreboding structure looms atop a low hill, surrounded by a 15-foot-high stone fence topped with a menacing tangle of iron spikes and blades. This is the Saltmarsh Barracks, which also serves as a jail. The aboveground portion of the fortified keep contains the armory and barracks for the city watch, as well as training facilities, dining halls, and other necessities. The three underground levels comprise the city jail; the deeper one travels, the more dangerous and terrible the prisoners become. The third level contains a well-stocked torture room, the existence of which is kept secret from the citizens. It's used only rarely, and only on the most hardened criminals who resist all other forms of interrogation.

Creatures: Although the watchtowers on the city walls have barracks, the majority of the city watch is stationed here. Walthas Kang, the current commander of the watch,

Saltmarsh Garrison

Upper Floor

Ground Floor



Prison Level 1: Processing and Holding

Prison Level 2: Maintenance and Workshops

Prison Level 3: Maximum Security

Key

One square equals 5 feet

Illus. by B. Hagan

The Saltmarsh Barracks does double duty as a jail

is assisted by a burly half-orc named Grust Redbeard who serves as the garrison's jailer.

Three types of guard units serve Walthas.

City Watch Patrols: The garrison keeps five of these groups, each composed of three 1st-level warriors led by a 5th-level warrior; two groups are always on patrol.

City Stalkers: The garrison has five stalkers, all 3rd-level rangers who operate as undercover guards in the city, although only one or two can be found here at a time.

City Brutes: These consist of gangs of three 1st-level barbarians led by a 5th-level barbarian; only two of these units are kept, and they live below, serving as guards for the jail and as elite fighting forces when needed.

Adventure Hook: A character who gets arrested almost certainly ends up here. Saltmarsh's crimes are punished by incarceration, and the size of the jail is more than up to the task. The upper level of the dungeon is reserved for short sentences and minor criminals, the middle level for longer-term prisoners (up to five years), and the lower level for life terms. Escape from the Saltmarsh Jail, while difficult, might provide high adventure for the right type of PCs. Alternatively, the PCs might need to sneak into the jail to interrogate or even rescue a prisoner (who might or might not have been imprisoned unjustly).

44. SLAUGHTERHOUSE

An almost palpable stink of death surrounds this large slaughterhouse. Livestock purchased from merchants to supplement the small number of farms is brought here for slaughter and preparation. The killing takes place in several underground chambers, with the waste dumped into pits of cultivated green slime that is burned off once a week, giving forth large plumes of nasty green smoke.

Neighbors have long lobbied for the relocation of the slaughterhouse, but the town council is reluctant to move one of the city's largest backup food processing operations outside the city walls, so for now it's staying put.

Creatures: Four slovenly and unpleasant brothers—Kinto, Parne, Torkan, and Vander Anderhoff—currently own and operate the slaughterhouse. The brothers refer to themselves as the Sawfish Boys because of the large sawfish that Torkan caught several years ago, which he preserved and mounted over the main entrance to the abattoir. Townsfolk tolerate the Sawfish Boys, who are anything but friendly, mostly because no one else wants to do the job that they so obviously enjoy.

Adventure Hook: As time has passed, the Sawfish Boys have grown braver with their antics and mayhem. They've come to realize that their willingness to do their job affords

them a lot of leeway in the kinds of "entertainment" they can get away with. Recently, the smartest of the brothers (Vander) learned that a small fortune in platinum coins might be hidden in the shipyard (area 27), and they're preparing a clandestine raid of the building once they can get a map of the place from the Black Market (area 49).

45. STONEMASONS' GUILDHALL

This large stone building looms over the nearby city wall. The yard to the south is often strewn with blocks of imported stone and gravel; more lie inside the main warehouse of the building. The guildhall of stonemasons also serves as a distribution point for all manner of stone building materials needed in town and in nearby regions. Few good places exist nearby to quarry stone, so it has to be imported.

Creatures: The current guildmaster of stonemasons is a sour-faced human named Yonshi Quansath. He's a talented stonemason, but he's an even more talented complainer; nothing ever seems to be good enough for him. His three most common topics of ire and profanity are the Sawfish Boys and the slaughterhouse (area 44); Kailee Restinan, owner of the Lizard's Boat (area 18), who once humiliated him in public; and Flanigan Lorsk, owner of Whitecap Shipping (area 29), who seems to take a perverse delight in taxing and fining Yonshi's stone imports.

Adventure Hook: Yonshi's getting ready to do something about Flanigan Lorsk. His current plan is to find out which prostitute Flanigan visits the most at the Dancing Dryad (area 47), murder her, and then frame Flanigan for the deed, thereby eliminating one of his biggest problems in town. Yonshi isn't quite sure how to go about the task, though. If he finds out that Flanigan has grown attached to a PC, he decides to arrange for that PC's murder instead, hiring an assassin from out of town to do the job.

46. LILYBROOK ORPHANAGE

This large, gothic-styled house seems a bit out of place next to the humble and serviceable Saltmarsh architecture nearby. One of the first buildings constructed in town, the orphanage was once the holding of the Lassiter family (area 57). When Saltmarsh's nobility began moving up on Saltmarsh Point to the west, the Lassiter family moved as well. For several years, the mansion sat empty, until an enterprising aristocrat named Audry Lilybrook purchased and renovated the mansion, transforming it into an orphanage.

Since its founding, the Lilybrook Orphanage has helped reform and educate hundreds of wayward children and urchins. Today, the orphanage cares for over three dozen orphans, and Audry Lilybrook has had to bring on a staff of five to help maintain order. The house looks foreboding, but the citizens of Saltmarsh agree that it does a lot of good. Of course, rumors swirl of something sinister going on in Lilybrook, but most people ascribe these rumors to cruel and vindictive children trying to besmirch the name of a humanitarian effort to better the lives of the unfortunate.

Creatures: Audry Lilybrook is nearly seventy-five years old now, but she remains spry and smart as a whip. Her voice is shrill and impossible to ignore, and she runs the orphanage with a firm but understanding hand. Her five assistants deal with a regular influx of new orphans, but something (such as sickness, accidents, or runaways) always seems to keep the orphanage from running at full capacity. In any case, visitors to the orphanage note that the children are remarkably well behaved and polite, with only a few troublemakers whispering about demons in the basement and witches in the attic.

Adventure Hook: Unfortunately, the troublemakers are right—Audry Lilybrook is a cultist of the foul demon lord Graz'zt. She purchased the house from the Lassiter family as a cover for her coven of cultists; her five "assistants" are 2nd-level adepts who scour the city for inductees into the cult, under the ruse of looking for foster parents. Audry is quite skilled at guessing who might be receptive to her offers of power and wealth, and has so far recruited nearly one hundred fifty of Saltmarsh's citizens into her cult, many of them lapsed worshipers of Pelor. These new inductees are told of an emerging deity of luck called Jodai, and told that if they worship Jodai in secrecy, their luck will vastly improve. Each of these cultists receives a tiny brand between the shoulder blades, and in the weeks that follow, they find that their luck seems to increase the more they offer prayers to "Jodai" in the privacy of their homes. Audry's plans for her cult and the actual source of the strange luck have yet to be revealed, but these secrets certainly don't have Saltmarsh's best interests at heart.

The children of the orphanage are safe as long as they don't get too nosy about what goes on in the attic and basement. They're an excellent cover for Audry, and it's only the troublemakers—who try to reveal her cult—that end up being fed to the fiendish animals she keeps locked in kennels deep below the orphanage.

Anyone who gains the brand of Jodai (actually a brand of Graz'zt) and offers prayers at night in secret finds that one of his skills in which he has at least 1 rank (selected at random) gains a +1 profane bonus. Additionally, small bits of luck, such as finding a silver piece in the road or getting a good seat at a crowded tavern, seem to become more common. Over time, the character's alignment shifts to evil, at which point Audry takes the convert into her full confidence.

47. THE DANCING DRYAD

Part game hall, part tavern, part inn, and part brothel, the Dancing Dryad is one of the most notorious buildings in Saltmarsh. It presents a flashy façade, one that seems a bit out of place this close to the slums. Marble columns carved to resemble trees line the walls of the building, and a permanent *silent image* of a scandalously writhing woman

with pale skin and green hair undulates on a miniature stage built to resemble a forest glen above the main entrance.

Inside, the main room is filled with tables for playing cards, dice, and several other games of chance, all run by the house. Beautiful women dressed as dryads and nymphs take drink orders along with handsome men dressed as satyrs and pixies. A large stage at the far end of the hall is a full-sized replica of the miniature forest glen from the sign out front; the nights that the "dryad" dances on the stage tend to be the busiest.

Customers can rent rooms on the upper floors for sleeping, but most of the Dancing Dryad's clientele rent them for more carnal purposes. The serving men and women offer more than drink here.

Creatures: The Dancing Dryad is a front for Saltmarsh's thieves' guild. Several underground chambers below the building serve as the actual guildhouse. According to town records, the owner of the Dancing Dryad is Oslor Pendicraw, but he's little more than a smokescreen—an ally of the guild, though not an official member. The actual owner is Sasha Amistar, a canny and beguiling half-elf. She performs as the dancing dryad three nights a week, using her bard spells to make herself appear as a dryad; her disguise has fooled many druids and rangers into outrage at the perceived abuse of an innocent fey. Each time, though, Sasha talks the offended person into becoming an ally, while still disguised as the dryad. Her true appearance and role in the business are known only to guild members and a select few others in town, including her lover, Toren Aerakin, one of the town councilors. This connection is one of the primary reasons her operation has remained so well hidden for the past several years.

Adventure Hook: Any PC rogue who tries to contact Saltmarsh's underground is likely led here. Of course, no one gets far without the password, which changes daily. Learning the current password requires a DC 20 Gather Information check followed by a DC 20 Diplomacy or Intimidate check.

Presenting the password to any of the workers here gets the character an audience with one of Sasha's underlings. The newcomer must run a grueling obstacle course in a large chamber below the Dancing Dryad; the test involves at least ten skill checks (all at DC 20, selected semirandomly from the rogue class skill list), of which the applicant must make at least six. Success results in an invitation to join the thieves' guild; failure means that the guild is forever closed to that character.

There's no love lost between the thieves' guild and the assassins' guild. The two groups often butt heads over territories, jobs, and philosophies, but for now, they're not at war. It wouldn't take much to ignite one, though.

Illus. by E. Cox

The Dancing Dryad tempts slum dwellers into sampling its wares

48. THE FLOUNDER POUNDER

Half of this seedy-looking tavern is built on stilts out over the waters of the harbor, while the other half rests firmly on the ground. A sign above the shaky front door depicts a mustached man hammering a large flounder into mash with a mallet. Inside, the place reeks of stale grog, raw fish, and body odor, although the regular patrons don't seem to mind that much. A rickety bar winds along the southern wall, and open holes in the eastern floor drop into the water below. The patrons fish from these holes or relieve themselves in them as needed. The tavern's name comes from the house specialty, flounder pounded to a thick mash (bones, eyes, and all) and then fried in lard and grog into flatcakes.

This establishment seems to be a standard example of a tavern gone sour, but a DC 25 Sense Motive check allows a character to notice that the patrons are merely playing at being drunk and that most of them remain alert and observant. As is the case with the nearby Dancing Dryad (area 47), the Flounder Pounder is a front for a shadier business—in this case, an assassins' guild.

A secret tunnel below the western end of the bar leads down to a partially flooded passage that winds its way to the west, up out of the water and into a small network of caves under the Rasivath Mansion (area 56). The Rasivaths have no clue that the assassins' guildhouse is hidden just below their basement.

Creatures: The tavern and the guild are both run by the same man, a shifty-eyed, middle-aged human by the name of Ned Shakeshaft. Ned's lived in Saltmarsh for most of his life, making a living doing jobs that other people shudder at. For many years, he worked for Dircroft Cronan at the tailors' guildhall (area 23), until a mission went bad and Ned was nearly killed by a group of adventurers to whom Dircroft had taken a dislike. Ned has since worked his way up the rungs of the assassins' guild, only recently becoming its guildmaster. A greedy, self-centered menace, Ned's attention is rarely a good thing.

Only ten or so assassins belong to the guild today, but their footprint in Saltmarsh's social scene is large; the average person on the street thinks that a nest of dozens of assassins hides somewhere in the city. The members are rogues who grew dissatisfied with the thieves' guild and managed to escape (usually by faking their own deaths).

Adventure Hook: Anyone who takes a dislike to the PCs and has both the excess of coin and the lack of morals and bravery required might take out a contract on one of them. More likely, though, something the PCs do (a favor here, a good deed there) triggers a chain of related events that culminates with inciting the assassins to finally strike at the thieves' guild. A war between the two guilds has been simmering for some time now, and it won't take much to set it off.

49. BLACK MARKET

The shacks and shanties that line this street use the cliff wall here as integral support. This building is no exception; it's little more than a lean-to piled against the

Ned Shakeshaft of the Flounder Pounder serves up some discipline to a local thug

Illus. by R. Spencer

rock. The doors and windows are boarded up; peeking through the slats reveals what appears to be an abandoned house. Characters who insist on entering the building can do so by walking through the northern wall, which has completely fallen away. Those with the Track feat who make a DC 15 Survival check notice something of interest—a number of partially hidden tracks mar the ground inside the shack.

That's because this building is the entrance to the Saltmarsh Black Market, one of the best-kept secrets in town. A secret door set in the cliff wall in the house (Search DC 25) provides access to a number of underground chambers below Saltmarsh Heights. Normally, the door is locked and guarded from the tunnel side. A PC can open it with a DC 30 Open Lock check and gain entrance by giving the guard (human fighter 2/rogue 1) the proper password. Learning the word requires a DC 20 Gather Information check followed by a DC 20 Diplomacy or Intimidate check.

The Black Market itself consists of several rooms connected to a half-mile tunnel that opens in a hidden sea cave to the west of town, where the market's goods are delivered by smugglers, pirates, and worse. Several merchants ply their trades here, working together to regulate and protect one another. Numerous organizations, including the thieves' guild (area 47), the assassins' guild (area 48), Lassiter House (area 57), and the tinkers' guild (area 52), finance and support the Black Market.

Characters who wish to purchase goods from the Black Market must first find an agent in town with a DC 25 Gather Information check. Failure by 5 or more indicates that the town guard learns of the PCs' interest and approaches them for questioning, in which case the characters can't try to find the Black Market again for a week. Success indicates that an agent agrees to take the PCs' order; he makes the purchase for them and delivers the goods to wherever they wish. To help safeguard the market's secrets, outsiders are almost never allowed into the subterranean rooms.

As a general rule, anything up to the town's limit of 3,000 gp can be purchased on the Black Market without much fuss. Customers can buy more expensive items, too, but not as easily.

Goods costing from 3,001 to 4,500 gp take 2d6 days to arrive and have a 125% markup in price.

Goods costing from 4,501 to 6,000 gp take 1d4 weeks to arrive and have a 150% markup in price.

Goods costing from 6,001 to 15,000 gp take several months to arrive and cost at least twice the market value.

Creatures: All merchants of the Black Market are 3rd-level rogues; in addition, five 3rd-level barbarian ogres live in the market and provide protection as needed. The organizing force behind the market, and the creature that keeps it as vibrant as it is secret, is a business-minded doppelganger sorcerer named Vlistur. He lives in a small set of hidden rooms below the market and views its secrecy as his greatest responsibility, primarily because he receives kickbacks from all its merchants.

Adventure Hook: Although illegal, the Black Market also has its uses. Characters who are known to operate outside the law might be approached on the sly by one of the town's guildmasters or councilors to help defend the market's secrecy; perhaps a local paladin visiting the Cathedral of Pelor has obtained a list of names of Black Market agents. The town council values the market for many reasons, and it might hire the PCs to stealthily destroy or remove this list from circulation.

50. CRAZY NETTIE'S PLACE

Unique among the slums, this house is made of stone rather than wood and has a thatched roof. When winter storms come, it weathers them with ease, while the wooden buildings elsewhere on this promontory are badly damaged by the winds and the odd wave that reaches high enough to wash over the rock.

Creatures: Ages ago, long before Saltmarsh incorporated as a town, an eccentric druid named Quander built the house. He lived here for several decades before one day simply walking into the sea and drowning. For years thereafter, the locals avoided the place, but eventually they began to build closer and closer. Finally, a particularly brave resident named Nettie decided enough was enough and moved in. The fact that she developed a noisy set of insanities soon after was not lost on the locals, and while Nettie sometimes helps the poor of the region with her magic, she remains a figure of fright and suspicion.

Adventure Hook: Only a day after she moved into Quander's stone home, Nettie discovered a strange gold amulet and was driven mad. The amulet is possessed by an evil spirit, a disembodied and insane fiend named Loliakra. On bad days, Loliakra is in charge and spends its time using Nettie to rant, rave, and carve its plans for regaining its missing body on pieces of driftwood. On good days, Nettie burns these plans to keep Loliakra from finding the solution and does what she can to help the locals. The source of the haunted amulet and the location of Loliakra's body are left to you to devise.

51. DUNGSWEEPERS' GUILDHALL

This large structure perched on a rapidly narrowing ledge is set off on its own for a reason—this is the dungsweepers' guildhall. One of the only thriving businesses in the slums, this building is the base of operations for a large number of unskilled laborers who endlessly patrol the streets of Saltmarsh with one of their dung wagons. They clear the streets and alleys of filth and refuse, haul it back here, and burn it in the pit behind the building or dump it unceremoniously over the edge into the sea.

Creatures: The only person who lives here is the guildmaster, a foul human named Tarn Ticklip. He collects

payments from Saltmarsh for the services his guild provides, but the money barely covers the dozens of laborers he employs to haul dung wagons around town.

Adventure Hook: People throw out the most unexpected things. Tarn's only real source of entertainment is sorting through other people's garbage. Over the years, he's accumulated a stash of surprisingly valuable pieces of jewelry, damning letters, and other bits of useful or interesting trash. If the PCs dispose of something they'd rather not see again, Tarn might end up with it and sell it to the highest bidder.

52. TINKERS' GUILDHALL

This strange building seems to be made of equal parts wood, stone, and iron. Numerous smoking chimneys puff along its uneven rooftop, and the sounds of hammers, whistles, and metallic clangs periodically issue forth from within. A sign over the door depicts a set of interlocking gears.

This building, the tinkers' guildhouse, is a relatively new addition to Saltmarsh. All manner of inventors, clockworkers, gearmakers, lens grinders, and fine metalworkers are welcome here. The tinkers' guild is dedicated to the construction of mechanical and optic devices such as clocks, spyglasses, and other nonmagical but nonetheless wondrous inventions.

Creatures: The current master tinker is a wiry human named Andrati Paterwalus, a gifted toymaker whose windup nightingales, lobsters, and frogs are all the rage among children of the nobles. Less fortunate youngsters can't afford the expensive toys and only watch the frequent demonstrations of the mechanical wonders in the fields just outside town to the west. The noble children have taken to pitting the toys against each other, and they build intricate battle arenas there. Of course, Andrati puts on a big show about the damage done to his toys, but since the repairs bring near-constant business, he doesn't complain too loudly.

Adventure Hook: Andrati's secret is that his inventions are far from completely mechanical; they're actually minor constructs. He builds them and then masks any magical auras with a variant of the *nondetection* spell he researched. Ironically, his genius would net him a nice position in the wizards' guild (area 39) if he were to reveal the truth, but he finds that group to be far too hung up on itself; they have no joy or love of life, he's fond of saying under his breath. Andrati could make an excellent contact for PCs who feel the same way.

53. FASTRALLI MANSION

This mansion appears to be rather new. No vines grow on the surrounding stone wall, and the blue paint on the building's exterior is fresh and bright. A coat of arms above the gate depicts a hawk with a ring in its mouth on a field of blue.

Creatures: The Fastralli family is the newest addition to Saltmarsh's nobility. They come from a long line of gemcutters and jewelers and have much invested in the jewelers' guildhall (area 14) and its master, Rodelik Karneth. In fact, the family's intervention is what set Rodelik on the path of law. Oona Fastralli, a matronly woman who enjoys her new wealth and social status, leads the family.

Adventure Hook: The Fastrallis are still sorting out who their allies are, and they might hire sneaky PCs to investigate their standing with the other nobles.

54. AERAKIN MANSION

This sprawling mansion is well kept but obviously old. The four-story tower that looms over the main entrance dwarfs the mansion's two floors. Over the gate hangs a coat of arms bearing a mermaid on a field of green, her arms upraised, clutching a scroll in her left hand and a wand in her right.

Creatures: The Aerakin family is old blood in Saltmarsh, descended from one of the four adventurers who first claimed the region so long ago. Today, Toren Aerakin is the youngest ruling noble in Saltmarsh, having risen to the head of his household when both his parents and his grandfather died of a sudden violent illness. Gossip about town says that Toren poisoned them, but the young aristocrat angrily refutes these rumors and has had several people fined for slander as a result. Another subject of much gossip is the fact that Toren has yet to take a wife; he shares the mansion with his two younger brothers and four younger sisters. Toren inherited the role of town councilor from his grandfather as well and has turned out to be one of the more level-headed and reasonable councilors in recent history.

Adventure Hook: Toren's social situation is complicated. For many years, he's secretly been the lover of the mistress of the thieves' guild, Sasha Amistar (area 47). He always figured that there was plenty of time to sort things out before he inherited, but the sudden death of his parents and grandfather left him in a lurch. His new responsibilities have started to wear on him. Although Sasha enjoys being the lover of one of the town councilors (and the obvious benefits it brings for her guild), Toren grows more and more desperate to have her retire and become his wife publicly. When he becomes desperate enough, he might recruit the PCs to help convince Sasha to step down from her position and marry Toren, a task easier said than done.

55. AELTYN MANSION

The walls and shingled roof of this otherwise fine-looking mansion have been painted a shocking hue of orange. A coat of arms fixed above the gate depicts a leaping orange fish on a field of deep blue-green.

Creatures: The Aeltyn family represents the honorable path of the fisher. Their ancestors built not only the shipyard (area 27) but also the piers and bridges in Saltmarsh. Loris Aeltyn is the current ruling noble here. One of his first acts

upon inheriting the title was to paint the house orange to match the color of the family fish, the orange perch. His wife, children, and siblings were shocked and horrified at this development, but they've learned to accept the fact that the other nobles mock the color of their home.

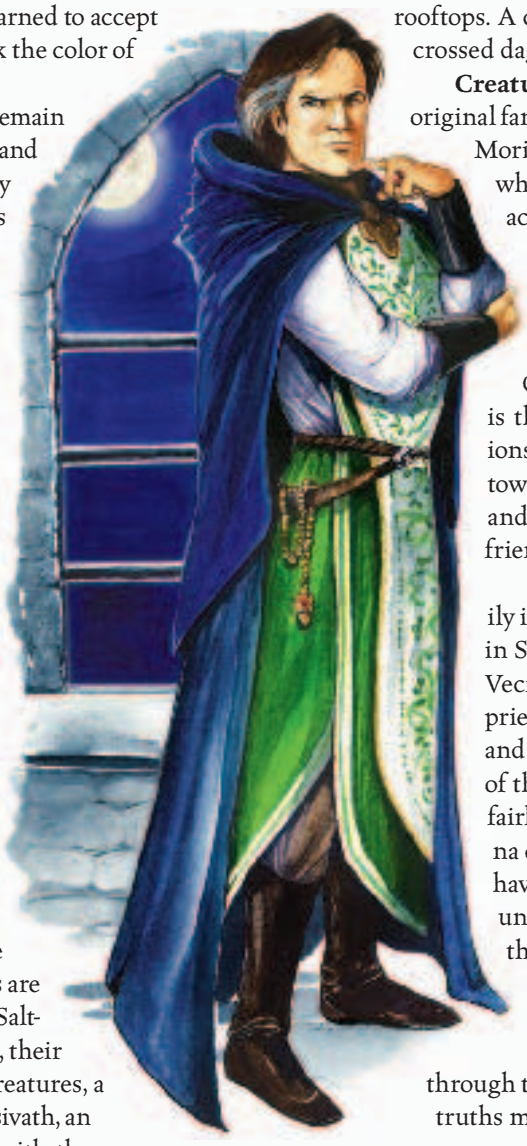
Adventure Hook: The Aeltyns remain quite active in the fishing industry, and if the PCs cause problems for any honest fishers, the family soon hears about it and demands recompense from them.

56. RASIVATH TOWER

Unlike the other large mansions in Saltmarsh, this noble villa is dominated by a tall stone tower and several ancient-looking oak trees. The coat of arms fixed to the top of the gate depicts an oak tree surrounded by rays of white light on a field of brown.

Creatures: The Rasivaths trace their lineage to one of the four founding adventurers of Saltmarsh; their ancestor was the druid Zestran Rasivath, and they continue to honor his memory by living in close proximity to nature. Thus, their mansion takes up a much smaller footprint on their family grounds than do the other noble houses. The Rasivaths are also the only nonhuman nobles in Saltmarsh. Although they're halflings, their home is scaled for human-sized creatures, a nod to their fellow nobles. Sara Rasivath, an elderly halfling who often visits with the druids of Oak Island (area 63), currently rules the family.

Adventure Hook: The Rasivaths don't suspect the treachery that lurks below their home— the town's assassins' guild that lies just under their basement. The family members sometimes hear rustlings or voices from below, but they've come to the conclusion that these are the spirits of their ancestors guarding their home. The Rasivaths even brag that their home is haunted, and the other nobles ignore them. No entrance leads from the basement to the guild below; the assassins access their guild by a long tunnel from the Flounder Pounder (area 48). If their guild is ever discovered, one of the assassins pulls a lever to collapse the tunnel and open a hole between the guild and the Rasivath basement above. The assassins hope that the ensuing scandal will give them plenty of cover to regroup and relocate.



Egan Lassiter, ruling noble of Lassiter House

Illus. by G. Kubic

57. LASSITER HOUSE

This fine mansion is as stately as it is classic. Gargoyles perch on its eaves, and lightning rods jut from its rooftops. A coat of arms over the gate depicts a crossed dagger and key on a field of gold.

Creatures: The Lassiters are one of the original families of Saltmarsh, descended from Moria Lassiter, one of the adventurers who founded the town. They remain active in town, particularly in the merchants' guild (area 17), the Saltmarsh Playhouse (area 24), and the Saltmarsh Museum (area 38). They also have ties to the Lilybrook Orphanage (area 46). Egan Lassiter is the current ruling noble. His opinions often cause great arguments in the town council (of which he is a member), and he has nearly as many enemies as friends in town.

Adventure Hook: The Lassiter family is in fact one of the deadliest dangers in Saltmarsh. They all secretly worship Vecna, and Egan Lassiter is their high priest. Many others belong to the cult, and they meet in catacombs carved out of the bedrock beneath the mansion. A fairly large underground temple of Vecna exists below as well, and the cultists have gathered a shocking number of undead and outsider minions to protect their secrets. One of their greatest secrets is the founding of the cult of Graz'zt in Lilybrook Orphanage. The Lassiters plan to reveal this cult through their agents if they believe their own truths might be exposed, and hope that the uproar over the demon cultists will draw attention away from themselves. Revealing the Lassiter cultists and ridding Saltmarsh of this festering evil is a task for only the bravest PCs.

58. AMBERMEAD HOUSE

This solidly constructed mansion seems to have been built more for practical service than an ostentatious display of wealth. But it also seems run-down, its grounds a bit overgrown and unkempt. The coat of arms depicts a silver hound leaping over the moon on a field of black.

Creatures: The Ambermeads have fallen on hard times recently, and Tobias Ambermead, the current ruling noble, is nearing his wit's end. His family made its fortune in wine and owns a large number of vineyards to the west. Recently, however, the vineyards have been raided by flocks of persistent ravens and crows and (more disturbingly) by

monitor lizards from the nearby swamps. Tobias believes that the lizardfolk are behind the attacks on his lands, and he's grown tired of demanding explanations from the Lizard Embassy (area 22). Now, he simply wants all the lizards in town exiled and seeks to have a bounty enacted on all lizardfolk and monitor lizards in the wild.

Adventure Hook: In truth, Tobias's woes aren't the fault of the lizardfolk (although they aren't doing much to help the case by ignoring his complaints). The animal attacks on his lands are being orchestrated by a bitter ex-lover named Skie Rayncliff, whom Tobias impregnated during a torrid affair. Rather than have his illegitimate child nearby, he broke off the affair and paid to have Skie and her unborn child forcibly relocated to a city far to the north. Skie miscarried along the trip when giants attacked her traveling party, but she somehow survived. Filled with rage at Tobias, she worked her way back south, built up a small fortune as a burglar, and then used the money to hire a shady ranger named Baswulf Tisk to aid in ruining her former lover's livelihood. She plans to reveal his indiscretions to the rest of his family, but only after letting him suffer over the attacks on his vineyards.

59. TIMERTIKOS HOUSE

One of the most impressive buildings on the entire hillside, this sprawling mansion has a carved façade and features numerous topiaries of fantastic animals on its grounds. The coat of arms over the gate depicts a winged helmet above a pair of crossed gauntlets on a field of red.

Creatures: Descended from Orrin Timertikos, a famous paladin and one of the four adventurers who founded the town, the Timertikos family has had representation on the town council since the start. Currently, its ruling patron Erolin Timertikos serves Saltmarsh not only as a councilor but also as its lord mayor. He's held the post for nearly three decades now, and his popularity remains high. He's getting on in years, though, and of late his primary concern is nominating a new lord mayor for the rest of the council to ratify upon his death. He'd love to have one of his sons take the job, but they don't seem all that interested in it.

Erolin Timertikos, Lord Mayor of Saltmarsh

Adventure Hook: If one of the PCs proves especially gallant, upstanding, and charismatic in dealing with Saltmarsh and its people, Erolin might take note and select that character as a possible nominee for the next lord mayor. Being lord mayor-elect brings a wealth of rewards, and eventually, rulership of the town might fall to the PC as well.

60. ANDRIGAL MANSION

This might once have been a proud, impressive mansion, but its days of glory are far gone. The building is run-down, with sagging roofs, boarded-up windows, peeling paint, and wretchedly overgrown grounds. Rust and moss are the rule here. A pitted, badly eroded coat of arms hangs askew over gates that are chained shut with rusty links; whatever heraldic device might have graced it has long since faded away.

Creatures: The Andrigal Mansion is the source of rumors and wild speculation among the citizens of Saltmarsh. It existed before the town did, at that time the expansive grounds of the Andrigals, a religious family that served St. Cuthbert. When Saltmarsh was founded, the Andrigals helped fledgling businesses get off their feet, but their greatest project was the construction of a large cathedral to St. Cuthbert. The family patriarch, Jarthis Andrigal, wanted it to be his clan's greatest gift to the burgeoning town. With the cathedral nearly complete, Jarthis called upon the daughter of an old friend to serve as the cathedral's priest. Her name was Soshyn Anamar, and she was in fact Jarthis's secret lover.

The night she arrived in town, Jarthis invited her up to his mansion for dinner and tried to take from her what he viewed as his reward for securing the honorable position of high priest. She refused, and things turned violent. In the scuffle, she accidentally broke Jarthis's arm. Infuriated, he struck her with a statuette of St. Cuthbert and knocked her out. Believing he had killed her, he and his siblings dragged her body into the basement and tried to dispose of her in a tub of lye. As the lye hit her and began to destroy her body, she awoke in agony. She just had time to see Jarthis and his brothers and realize what had happened before the Andrigals finished the job with a shovel.

That was the beginning of the end for the Andrigals. Though no one ever learned of Soshyn's death (Jarthis

Illus. by G. Kubic

Andrigal Mansion

had never announced his plan to make her the high priest, or even that she was coming to Saltmarsh), townsfolk noted that the Andrigals suddenly grew insular and reclusive. Work stopped on the cathedral, and over the next several months, people saw less and less of the nobles. One day, the town councilors paid a visit and were aghast to find the house an abattoir. Someone had gone from room to room several days before and horribly murdered the Andrigals. Jarthis's body was missing, and people assumed he had done the deed and fled. The mansion was boarded up, the cathedral was eventually finished and rededicated to Pelor, and life went on in Saltmarsh. The Andrigals soon passed from daily conversation, except for the odd whispered rumor.

Adventure Hook: It's generally accepted in town that the Andrigal Mansion is haunted. Children often dare one another to run up to the front door and knock three times, and they tell stories of little Baxter Larenby, who accepted a dare to sleep in the house alone. They say that he never came out; the city watch went in looking for him and emerged empty-handed, claiming to have found nothing but pale and silent about what they *did* find. Two months later, Baxter staggered back out of the house, his eyes filmed over with cataracts, his body skin and bones, and his fingers and toes completely gone. Baxter never said a word for the next four months, and then one day he walked off the cliff into the sea. No one's stayed a night in the Andrigal Mansion since.

The stories about the mansion are true, although it isn't the Andrigal family that haunts it. The family was murdered long ago by none other than the betrayed cleric Soshyn, risen from her unhallowed grave as a vampire. She left the bodies as they lay after she finished with them, except for a half-elf named Jarthis, whom she has kept alive in the basement for these many years, hidden in a soundproof room and tormented nightly. Jarthis has lived the last century or so of his life in constant agony.

Soshyn has preyed on Saltmarsh for nearly as long, but she is careful to take only lonely visitors and has kept her existence secret. She often lures her victims to Marshgate Bridge (area 35), using a *hat of disguise* to appear the way she looked when she lived—a seductive woman of twenty-three years of age. In her true form, which she reveals only as she takes the life of a victim, she is horribly bleached, scarred, and eaten away, the disfiguring damage inflicted on her by the lye preserved forever in undeath.

Soshyn is one of the most dangerous creatures in Saltmarsh, and you shouldn't spring her on the PCs until

Illus. by B. Hagan

Andrigal Mansion, a once-proud structure now in disarray . . . and, some say, haunted

they're of high level. When you judge that they're ready to take her on, have one of her victims get away and tell stories of the horrible melted woman who attacked him on the bridge. After much investigation, the PCs should be led to the Andrigal Mansion and the catacombs below, which are haunted by Soshyn's undead minions and several powerful fiends she has summoned with her divine magic, twisted by her new patron, Nerull.

61. SALTMARSH POINT FORUM

This stone structure is open to the air, a many-columned forum guarded by two large statues of knights on horseback. At the center of the forum stand four more statues—a paladin, a rogue, a wizard, and a druid, likenesses of the four adventurers who founded Saltmarsh so many years ago.

Nobles often gather here to discuss topics of the day or merely sightsee. From this vantage point, the view of Saltmarsh, Oak Island, and the sea is unparalleled.

The stone bridge that connects the forum to Oak Island is an architectural wonder, held aloft by only four thin pilings that reach down to the ground and the seabed below.

62. OAK ISLAND KEEP

This small, squat stone keep is abandoned. At one point in Saltmarsh's past, the town council kept a small garrison of guards here, with plans to turn the island into a naval base. The plans were scrapped when a small group of druids volunteered to watch the island, occupy the beacon at the far end, and warn the city in case of attack by sea. The keep itself remains, empty and overgrown with vines, and has become a favorite haunt of young nobles in love seeking a private place away from their parents.

63. OAK ISLAND

This sizable island juts from the surrounding waters. Nearly 250 feet high, it reaches roughly the same elevation as the Saltmarsh Highlands at their highest point. Oak and a few fir trees crowd the island; hawks and eagles nest in the branches, and small rodents and rabbits lurk in the underbrush below.

Creatures: Oak Island is tended by a group of five druids who serve Ehlonna and are led by a druid named Lira Tolivar. They spend much of their time relaxing in the woods here, but they keep a constant eye to the south for the approach of any enemies; they take their roles as guardians of the isle and of Saltmarsh very seriously.

64. STANDING STONES

Two massive obelisks capped by a stone menhir overlook the ocean here. The druids of Oak Island find this place to be the most holy on the isle and perform their rituals and religious ceremonies here. At sunrise and sunset, the view from this bluff is nothing short of magnificent.

Adventure Hook: Unknown to the druids, the standing stones were erected centuries ago by a foul-tempered pirate named Pigeye Pete to mark the location of one of his hidden caches of treasure. A map that leads the PCs to the stones might cause some problems with the druids, though. Even if they're convinced that the pirate's treasure can be found, they're loath to uproot the stones without significant favors from the PCs.

Lira Tolivar, leader of the Oak Island druids

Illus. by G. Kubic

65. SALTMARSH BEACON

The second artificial structure on Oak Island is a towering lighthouse of blue marble. Close inspection (and a DC 26 Spellcraft check) reveals that the entire structure was built with *walls of stone* and *stone shape* spells. The lighthouse itself is about 100 feet tall, its beacon a number of *continual flames* set in a massive lens. A small building adjoins the base of the tower, in which the druids bunk on nights when the weather is too rough to sleep under the stars.

A massive horn runs the length of the tower. A person at the top of the lighthouse can use it to create a booming, mournful tone that can be heard throughout the town of Saltmarsh. This is the alarm in case of enemy approach from the sea. Each year on the spring equinox, the druids sound the horn to ring in a new year and to keep the citizens of Saltmarsh used to the sound in case they need it.

Adventure Hook: The druids have cared for the beacon for many decades, and its familiar, constant shine at night is a fixture of the skyline. If something were to happen to the druids and the beacon were extinguished, the townsfolk might begin to panic. But none is brave enough to make the journey up there to investigate—except, perhaps, the PCs.

Illus. by A. Swekel

As DM, you have a cast of thousands at your disposal. It's your job to portray every person the PCs meet, from regal dwarf kings to unnamed spear-carriers, as well as every monster they encounter, from fearsome beholders to snarling hyenas. Moreover, you must remember how the bartender in the town of Saltmarsh behaved when the PCs last passed through—which was two months ago in the game world and more than six months ago in real time.

An NPC's importance can be measured by one simple yardstick—the degree to which the PCs interact with him. If the PCs spend time talking to the bartender every session, then he's more important than the king of the realm (whom the PCs might never meet), the doppelganger posing as a priest (whom the PCs might never uncover), or the blackguard rampaging through the nearby countryside (whom the PCs might fight and defeat in a single session).

Eventually, the truly important NPCs take on lives of their own, and the characters develop lasting relationships with them, treating some with the affection of close friends, and others with the scorn of bitter enemies. Whatever the nature of these relationships, playing these NPCs consistently is a vital part of being a great DM. After all, whenever the PCs interact with one of your important NPCs, the players are immersing themselves in the world and story you're creating.

CONTACTS

While adventuring in your campaign world, player characters meet countless NPCs. Some are villains or impartial observers, and some might even serve as comic relief, but a few become valuable allies to whom the PCs regularly turn for aid, information, or simple companionship. A PC who is particularly taken with one of these allies might want to recruit her as a cohort or even an apprentice, but for the most part, such individuals simply remain dependable friends.

Unearthed Arcana (pages 179–180) presents one set of guidelines for handling contacts. If you're looking for a simpler system that requires less paperwork and that rewards the PCs for roleplaying and interacting with NPCs, you can use the system presented here instead.

GAINING A CONTACT

A PC wishing to gain a contact must first select an NPC. If that person's attitude toward the character is worse than helpful, the first step must be to

Table 5–1: Sample Contacts

Contact	Class	Favors Provided at No Charge	Frequency
Agosti of the Shadow Shore	Wizard 5	Translate any nonmagical script	1/week
Deogol Knifethrower	Rogue 4	Forge a document	1/month
Farhaan Nicabar	Cleric 6	Smooth over trouble with local authorities	Once
Vasilii the Fat	Expert 5	Appraise an art item, a piece of jewelry, or a gem	1/week
Jal Omari	Soulknife 3	Accompany individual on one adventure up to 1 day in length	Once
Wildcat Rodorsson	Barbarian 5	Help train an animal for a purpose (see Handle Animal)	Once
Nisha of the Many Eyes	Rogue 7	Gather intelligence about any one local person	Once
Ialdabode	Psion (telepath) 5	Use *read thoughts* on one captive	1/month
Cynric the Pure	Cleric 5	Provide healing (*cure light wounds*)	1/month
Orkatz of the Green City	Expert 5	Help research a specific topic (+2 bonus on PC's Knowledge check)	1/week

adjust the NPC's attitude to helpful with a successful Diplomacy check. (A character can make someone do a favor for him with Intimidate, but he can't gain a long-term contact with this skill.) Once the NPC's attitude is helpful, the player simply declares his intent to make that NPC a contact.

A PC can have a number of contacts equal to her Charisma bonus (minimum one). In addition, a character who joins a guild (see Guilds, page 223) gains one extra guild contact. In this system, the character does not automatically gain new contacts upon attaining new levels. When a new slot opens for a contact, a PC must find and recruit one in the usual way.

USES FOR CONTACTS

A contact's behavior toward a PC falls somewhere between that of a cohort and a hireling. The contact won't risk his life for the PC or accompany her on adventures, but he can provide information on request, influence other groups and organizations on the PC's behalf, or make a skill check—as long as doing so doesn't cost any money. (If money is involved with the check, the PC must pay the expenses.) In addition, a contact might occasionally waive his normal fee for a service he has performed for the character. This kind of favor is available from a given contact only at specific intervals, as given in Table 5–1: Sample Contacts.

HIRELINGS

The *Dungeon Master's Guide* provides prices for hiring many different 1st-level commoners, but adventurers often require the services of a specialist—an NPC who is particularly good at a specific task. The higher the specialist is in level, the better he is at his task, and the more money his services cost. A specialist has an advantageous selection of feats, skills, and class abilities that, when combined, allow him to excel at a specific task.

Since most specialist NPCs don't focus their skills on combat or defense, they generally won't agree to accompany PCs on an adventure. Convincing a specialist to do so usually doubles or even triples his asking price, and he might also demand a share of the treasure, even if he doesn't help in combat.

Descriptions of the various kinds of specialists are given in the following sections. Character classes, skills, and feats that each type is likely to possess are provided, but full combat statistics are not. Specialists are usually experts, although some might multiclass into other classes to gain additional benefits relating to their chosen professions. Technically, spellcasters are also specialists, but they don't appear in the following sections, since the costs to have an NPC cast a spell or to commission the creation of a magic item are handled elsewhere.

Adventurers do not count as specialists, but they are described below because NPC adventurers often accompany PC parties for extended periods.

Adventurers and specialists always use the elite array (15, 14, 13, 12, 10, 8) to determine their ability scores.

ADVENTURERS

Unlike a specialist, an adventurer has no fear of accompanying others on dangerous missions. When PCs decide that their group needs an additional member for a particular mission—be it a cleric for extra healing, a rogue to deal with traps, or a fighter to provide additional combat support—they should hire an adventurer.

Adventurers are almost always single-classed NPCs. (Multiclass adventurers should be treated as unique NPCs who can't be hired simply with money.) You can use the tables on pages 113–126 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to generate statistics for adventurers quickly.

Typically, an adventurer's daily fee in gold pieces equals her character level squared, plus a split of any treasure gained—usually a half share of the total loot. However, she charges ten times her normal asking price and demands a full share of treasure if her character level is equal to or greater than the average party character level.

Adventurers don't gain experience points, so if the PCs need a higher-level adventurer for a subsequent mission, they must find a different one. A PC who takes a liking to a particular adventurer might take the Leadership feat and recruit her as a cohort, provided that his Leadership score is high enough to do so.

SPECIALISTS

Specialists' skills can vary greatly, but each chooses one skill in particular on which to focus his efforts, and places his best ability score (15) in the key ability for that skill. The skill selected depends on the specialist's calling. For example, a diplomat would obviously require Diplomacy, and an investigator would likely need Gather Information. Likewise, an animal trainer needs Handle Animal, a sage needs one particular Knowledge skill, and a locksmith needs Open Lock.

A specialist's daily rate of pay depends on his skill modifier for his chosen skill, not on his character level. Thus, the first step in determining the cost of hiring him for a service is to calculate his skill modifier.

Specialists' Skill Modifiers

Since the majority of specialists are human, the following discussion details how a human specialist builds up his modifier in his chosen skill. See the Nonhuman Specialists sidebar, below, for tips on adjusting skill bonuses for other races.

Table 5–2: Skill Modifiers for Human Specialists breaks down a human specialist's base skill modifier for his selected skill at any given level. It also gives the earliest point at which he can gain access to additional bonuses, such as magic items that boost ability scores or grant competence bonuses, feats that provide untyped skill bonuses, and masterwork tools.

Key Ability: At 4th level, a human specialist boosts the key ability for his chosen skill by 1 point, raising it to 16 and gaining another +1 bonus on checks with his chosen skill. He continues to boost this ability score each time he can do so thereafter (every four character levels). The acquisition of items that boost his ability scores are also taken into account in this column.

Feats: A specialist takes any feats that could boost the modifier for his chosen skill as soon as possible. Since he is entitled to two feats at 1st level as a human, he takes Skill Focus, which adds +3 to his skill modifier, and another skill-boosting feat (such as Alertness or Persuasive) that grants a +2 bonus on his chosen skill and one other. Concentration, Craft, Knowledge, Perform, and Profession are the only skills for which no such feats exist, so a specialist who has chosen one of these skills has a modifier 2 points lower than Table 5–2 indicates for his level.

Table 5–2: Skill Modifiers for Human Specialists

Level	Key Ability	Skill Modifier	Source of Bonuses	Cost
1st	15	+13	Feats, masterwork gear	2 gp
2nd	15	+14	—	2 gp
3rd	15	+17	Competence +2	3 gp
4th	16	+22	Competence +5	4 gp
5th	16	+23	—	4 gp
6th	16	+24	—	504 gp
7th	18	+26	Ability item +2	505 gp
8th	19	+27	—	505 gp
9th	19	+28	—	505 gp
10th	19	+29	—	506 gp
11th	19	+30	—	1,007 gp
12th	20	+31	—	1,007 gp
13th	22	+33	Ability item +4	1,007 gp
14th	22	+35	—	1,008 gp
15th	24	+37	Ability item +6	1,008 gp
16th	26	+39	Inherent bonus +1	2,008 gp
17th	26	+40	—	2,009 gp
18th	26	+41	—	2,009 gp
19th	27	+42	Inherent bonus +1	2,009 gp
20th	28	+44	—	2,009 gp

Masterwork Gear: A specialist owns a masterwork instrument or masterwork tools as appropriate for his chosen specialty. This item grants him a +2 circumstance bonus on his skill check.

Competence: At 3rd level, a specialist takes the Favored in Guild feat (see page 227), gaining a +2 competence bonus on his chosen skill. At 4th level, he can afford a magic item that grants him a +5 competence bonus on his skill check.

Ability Item: At 7th level, a specialist can afford to buy an item that boosts his key ability score by +2. At 13th level, he upgrades this item to one that grants a +4 bonus, and at 15th level, he upgrades to one that grants a +6 bonus.

Inherent Bonus: At 16th level, a specialist can afford an item or spell that grants a +1 inherent bonus to his key ability score. At 19th level, he can afford a second such increase.

Other Adjustments: As described under Skill Synergy, page 66 of the *Player's Handbook*, a +2 bonus applies to checks made with each of the following skills when the specialist accumulates at least 5 ranks in the appropriate related skill (given in parentheses): Appraise (Craft), Balance (Tumble), Diplomacy (Bluff), Gather Information (Knowledge [local]),

NONHUMAN SPECIALISTS

All the specialists detailed in the previous sections are human. A specialist of a different race can sometimes gain additional benefits in the form of racial bonuses on checks with her chosen skill and racial bonuses to key abilities.

As a general rule, nonhuman specialists should be more difficult to find than their human counterparts. If, however, a PC wishes to hire a half-celestial artisan or a gray elf sage, begin by adjusting the key ability score and skill modifiers given in Table 5–2 to take her racial bonuses into account. Since a nonhuman specialist starts with only one feat, she takes Skill Focus in her chosen skill at 1st level and Favored in Guild at 3rd level. Because she must wait until 6th level to gain a skill-boosting feat such as Alertness or Persuasive, a nonhuman specialist of 1st–5th level has a skill modifier 2 lower than a human specialist of comparable ability would.

Once you have calculated her total skill modifier, simply determine her daily rate normally (see Cost of Hiring a Specialist, page 156).

Intimidate (Bluff), Jump (Tumble), Knowledge (nature) (Survival), Ride (Handle Animal), Sleight of Hand (Bluff), Spellcraft (Knowledge [arcana]), and Tumble (Jump). Therefore, at 2nd level, a specialist who has chosen one of these skills increases his ranks to 5 in the appropriate related skill. The resulting bonus from skill synergy is not accounted for in the skill modifiers given in Table 5–2. Bonuses from skill synergy also apply on Climb, Disguise, Escape Artist, Search, Survival, Use Magic Device, and Use Rope checks under certain conditions, but since they don't apply at all times, they don't modify the specialist's rate of pay.

Cost of Hiring a Specialist

The base cost of hiring a specialist depends on his total skill modifier, not on his character level. Hiring a more skilled specialist might cost more per day, but it also decreases the time required to make specific items. In most cases, hiring a 1st-level standard crafter is the least expensive option, although the Craft modifier for such a specialist is only +4.

Total Cost: The total cost of hiring a specialist is his base cost (see below) plus any additional fees.

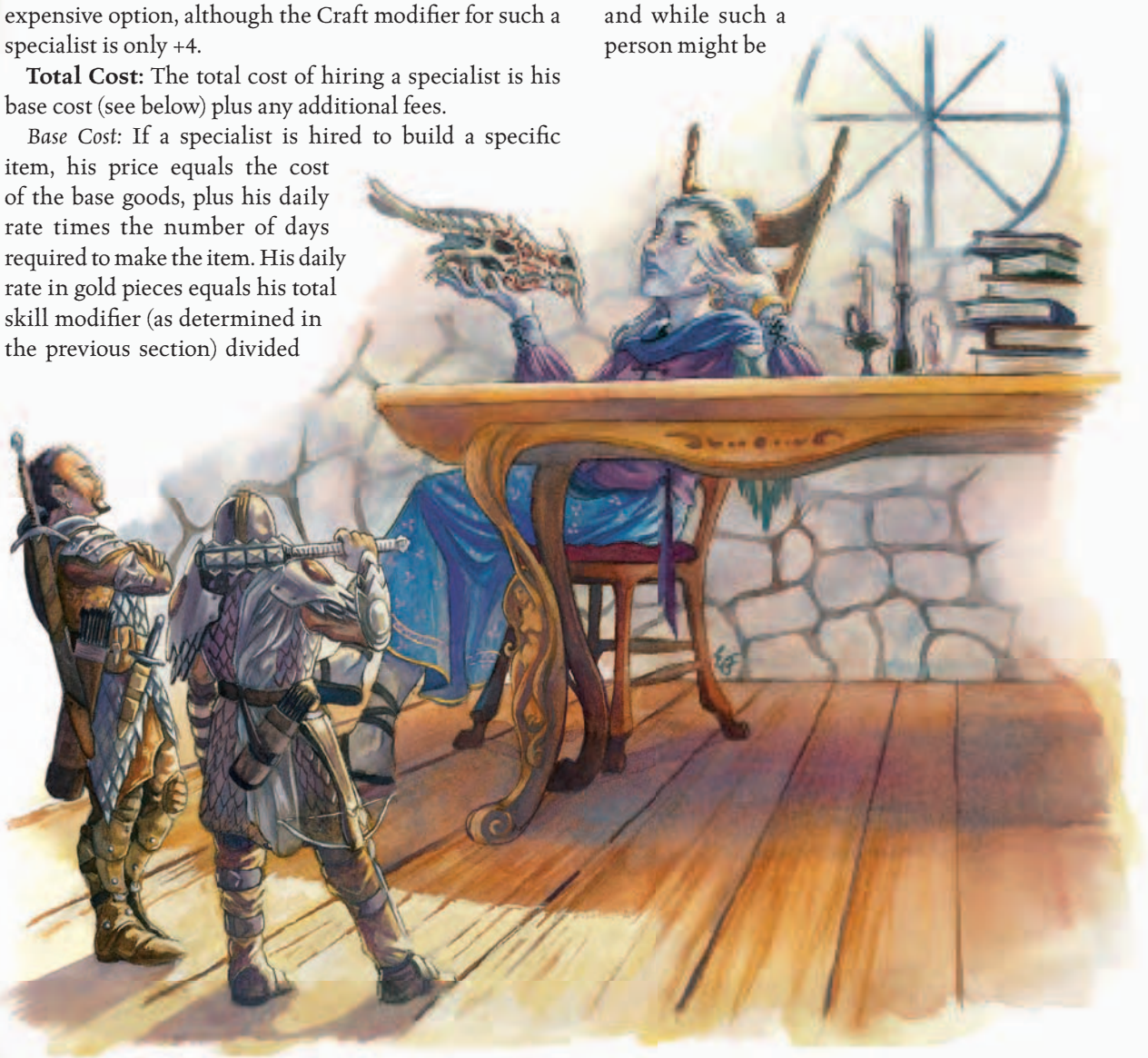
Base Cost: If a specialist is hired to build a specific item, his price equals the cost of the base goods, plus his daily rate times the number of days required to make the item. His daily rate in gold pieces equals his total skill modifier (as determined in the previous section) divided by 5 (minimum of 1 gp/day), rounded down to the nearest whole number.

Additional Fees: Specialists sometimes charge fees in addition to the base cost of the project, as given in Table 5–3.

Table 5–3: Specialists' Additional Fees

Reason	One-Time Fee
Hazardous task	500 gp
Accomplished specialist (6th–10th level)	500 gp
High-level specialist (11th–15th level)	1,000 gp
Exceptionally high-level specialist (16th–20th level)	2,000 gp

Although Table 5–2 gives skill modifiers for specialists up to 20th level, few (if any) exceptionally high-level specialists exist in most campaign worlds. As a general rule, characters should have to do a fair amount of research to locate a specialist of 11th–15th level. A specialist of 16th–20th level is of near legendary status, and while such a person might be



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Regdar and Jozan consult with a cloud giant sage in her quarters

easy to locate, she might live in some out-of-the-way region. Simply reaching such a high-level specialist should be an adventure in itself.

SAMPLE SPECIALIST PRICES

The most cost-effective specialist is always one who can take 10 on her skill check to achieve the desired result. This section provides prices for specialists at that level of expertise who offer the services most often sought by adventurers.

Although these prices are fairly low, the indicated services are usually available only in large cities or places where particularly high-level specialists can be found. Some of the services described in Table 5–4 are especially pricey because they require high-level specialists, involve hazard pay, or both.

Table 5–4: Specialist Prices

Service	Time	Cost
Appraisal (standard object)	1 minute	1 gp
Appraisal (exotic object)	1 minute	2 gp
Verbal delivery: simple message	Variable	1 gp
Verbal delivery: complex message	Variable	2 gp
Decipher simple written message	1 minute/pg	2 gp
Decipher standard written message	1 minute/pg	3 gp
Decipher complex written message	1 minute/pg	4 gp
Diplomat[1] (friendly to helpful)	1 minute	2 gp
Diplomat[1] (indifferent to helpful)	1 minute	4 gp
Diplomat[1] (unfriendly to helpful)	1 minute	1,006 gp
Diplomat[1] (hostile to helpful)	1 minute	1,508 gp
Information (major news items)	1d4+1 hours	1 gp
Information (uncommon)	1d4+1 hours	2 gp
Information (dangerous/obscure)	1d4+1 hours	503 gp
Sage (basic question)	Immediate[2]	1 gp
Sage (tough question)	Immediate[2]	2 gp
Sage (extremely tough question)	Immediate[2]	4 gp
Lockpick (simple lock)	1 round	2 gp
Lockpick (average lock)	1 round	3 gp
Lockpick (good lock)	1 round	4 gp
Lockpick (amazing lock)	1 round	506 gp
Potion Identification	1 minute	3 gp

1 This price also applies to thugs and goons hired to intimidate a target.

2 The price given is for quick answers of no more than a few words. Generally, a sage needs time to research and collate information when asked for more detail. In such cases, the time required increases to 1d12 days, during which the sage requires daily payment for services.

UNIQUE ABILITIES

Not all NPCs are created equal. Just as PCs can gain unusual benefits and abilities in the course of a campaign, strange occurrences and once-in-a-lifetime events can gift an NPC with powers normally beyond his reach. Consider, for example, the old hermit who lives on the hill and periodically has visions of the future, or the sinister murderer who stalks a city at night, shrugging off damage with apparent ease. Assigning unique abilities to NPCs not only adds flavor and color to your game but also helps keep players on their toes even if they know the rules backward and forward. An experienced player whose character encounters a traveling ranger with a bow and a wolf might be able to guess that she is at least a 4th-level ranger, but he won't expect her to react to an attack by revealing an extra pair of arms, each wielding another weapon.

Table 5–5: Unique NPC Abilities presents a wide range of attack options and special qualities that you can assign to any NPC. You can either roll for an ability randomly or select one that seems appropriate.

While some of these abilities mimic spells, and others increase in potency if the NPC is higher level or has exceptionally high ability scores, all can be used for NPCs of any level. However, Table 5–5 also provides a CR adjustment for each ability so that you can be sure that the resulting NPC does not present too difficult a challenge for your PCs. As a rule of thumb, no NPC should have a unique ability that raises her CR more than 3 beyond the average level of the PCs who will encounter her. A character who can produce a *circle of death* effect, for example, could be a rude surprise for a party of lower-level characters.

These unique abilities were created for use by NPCs, not PCs. Because player characters might also be subject to unusual or even bizarre circumstances that could confer similar abilities, Table 5–5 also provides a level adjustment for each unique ability. Because these abilities are not balanced for PC use, these level adjustments are quite liberal.

Don't overuse unique abilities; they should always remain exceptions to the rule. They exist primarily as tools for creating a memorable NPC who can become the focus of an entire adventure. After all, if every second or third NPC has extra arms or innate spell-like abilities, the novelty of such powers will soon be lost. As a rule of thumb, consult the table no more than once for every two levels that the PC party advances.

Table 5–5: Unique NPC Abilities

d20	CR Adjustment	Level Adjustment	Unique Ability
1	+1	+2	Aberrant limbs
2	+2	+5	Abysmally wretched
3	+2	+4	Arcane adept
4	+1	+2	Divinity
5	+2	+4	Doomwatcher
6	+1	+2	Dragon touched
7	+1	+3	Fey spirit
8	+0	+1	Graced from outside
9	+2	+5	Gravetouched
10	+0	+1	Guardian spirit
11	+0	+1	Lifemate
12	+2	+5	Naturebond
13	+2	+5	Past life
14	+0	+1	Poisonlaced
15	+0	+2	Prodigy
16	+1	+5	Prophet
17	+2	+4	Spore carrier
18	+3	+7	Stormtouched
19	+4	+12	Unearthly beauty
20	+2	+5	Vestigial twin

UNIQUE ABILITY DESCRIPTIONS

The following entries describe the unique NPC abilities given in Table 5–5 and provide a bit of background to explain how the NPC might have gained each ability.

Aberrant Limbs (Ex): The NPC was born with an extra pair of arms or an extra pair of legs. He might or might not be able to withdraw the aberrant limbs into his body to hide his unusual nature; if he can, he gains a +10 bonus on Disguise checks made to hide the aberrant limbs. An NPC with an extra pair of arms gains Multiweapon Fighting as a bonus feat. The land speed of an NPC with an extra pair of legs increases by 20 feet.

Abysmally Wretched (Su): The NPC is horrendously ugly and disgusting to look upon. Any creature within 30 feet that looks at the uncovered countenance of the NPC must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 NPC's character level + NPC's Cha modifier) or become nauseated for 1d4 rounds. Thereafter, the affected creature can look at the NPC without ill effects. Each day, the NPC can affect a total number of creatures equal to her character level with this ability. The closest creatures are affected first, and those with the lowest Hit Dice before those with higher Hit Dice.

Arcane Adept (Su): The NPC comes from a long line of spellcasting heroes or villains, and she has inherited some of her parents' magical talents. She has a limited number of spell-like abilities that mimic sorcerer/wizard spells. The NPC can use one 1st-level effect up to three times per day, one 2nd-level effect twice per day, or one 3rd-level effect once per day. She must choose one of these three options at character creation, as well as the spell or spells duplicated. Once made, these choices cannot be changed. For any of these effects, the caster level equals the NPC's character level, and the save DC is 10 + 1/2 NPC's character level + NPC's Cha modifier. If the NPC takes levels in an arcane spellcasting class, the save DC for each of her spells increases by 1.

Divinity (Su): Whether he realizes it or not, the NPC is the offspring of a deity, though only the tiniest fraction of divinity persists in his mortal body. Select a domain granted by the deity in question. The NPC can use that domain's granted power as if he were a cleric of a level equal to his character level. In addition, he gains a +2 sacred (or profane) bonus on his choice of the following: attack rolls and initiative checks, all skill checks, or all saving throws. He must choose one of these three options at character creation, and once made, the selection cannot be changed. If the NPC takes levels in a divine spellcasting class, the save DC for each of his spells increases by 1.

Doomwatcher (Su): The NPC observed a horrifying or awesome supernatural event as a child—perhaps the casting of a *miracle* or *wish* spell, the appearance of a deity, an open portal to the Abyss, or some occurrence of similar importance. As a result, her eyes now glow with an unnatural color. She can see equally well with her eyes open or closed (even when she is blindfolded), and she can feign blindness to avoid attracting attention. Once per day when her eyes are open and uncovered, the NPC can employ a gaze attack that fills those who see it with powerful emotions. Her gaze is effective out to 30 feet, and anyone subjected to it can resist the effect with a successful Will saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 NPC's character level + NPC's Cha modifier). On a failed save, a victim is affected as though by the NPC's choice of the following spell effects (the NPC chooses with each use of the gaze): *confusion*, *crushing despair*, *fear*, *heroism*, *Tasha's hideous laughter*, or *rage*. The effect has a caster level equal to the NPC's character level. The NPC can switch the effect of her gaze once per round as a free action. She can use this ability for a total number of rounds equal to her character level with each activation.

Dragon Touched (Su): One of the NPC's ancient ancestors was a dragon of some sort, and its latent magical ability has surfaced within him. Select an energy type from the following: acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic. The NPC has immunity to damage of this type. In addition, he can belch out a 30-foot line of this energy as a breath weapon once per day, dealing 1d6 points per character level of the appropriate energy damage. A successful Reflex save (DC 10 + 1/2 NPC's character level + NPC's Con modifier) halves the damage dealt.

Fey Spirit (Su): The NPC's soul is infused with fey magic. Perhaps he has fey ancestors, was born to travelers who sought shelter in a fey mound (see page 70) during a storm, or lived for a hundred years as the playmate of a dryad in a realm where time doesn't exist. Whatever the cause, his brush with the fey has left him with the ability to make his voice either soothing and melodic or terrifying and intimidating whenever he wishes, gaining a +10 insight bonus on Diplomacy or Intimidate checks, respectively. More important, he can use *fear* and *charm monster* each once per day as spell-like abilities (save DC 10 + 1/2 NPC's character level + NPC's Cha modifier).

Graced from Outside (Su): Whether she realizes it or not, the NPC is descended from outsiders, and the nature of those ancestors influences her appearance. If her ancestors were celestials, her skin is smooth, her eyes golden, and her hair white or platinum. If, on the other hand, her forebears were fiendish, she might have vestigial horns or a cloven foot, or her breath might smell of brimstone. Though she is not quite a tiefling or an aasimar, the character nevertheless gains resistance to fire 5 and resistance to cold 5. More impressively, she can use a single cleric domain spell of up to 2nd level once per week as a spell-like ability (caster level equals NPC's character level; save DC 10 + 1/2 NPC's character level + NPC's Cha modifier). This spell must be chosen at the time of character creation from one of the following domains: Chaos, Evil, Good, or Law. Once made, this choice cannot be changed. While the

spell-like ability is active, the NPC's otherworldly features become markedly more pronounced.

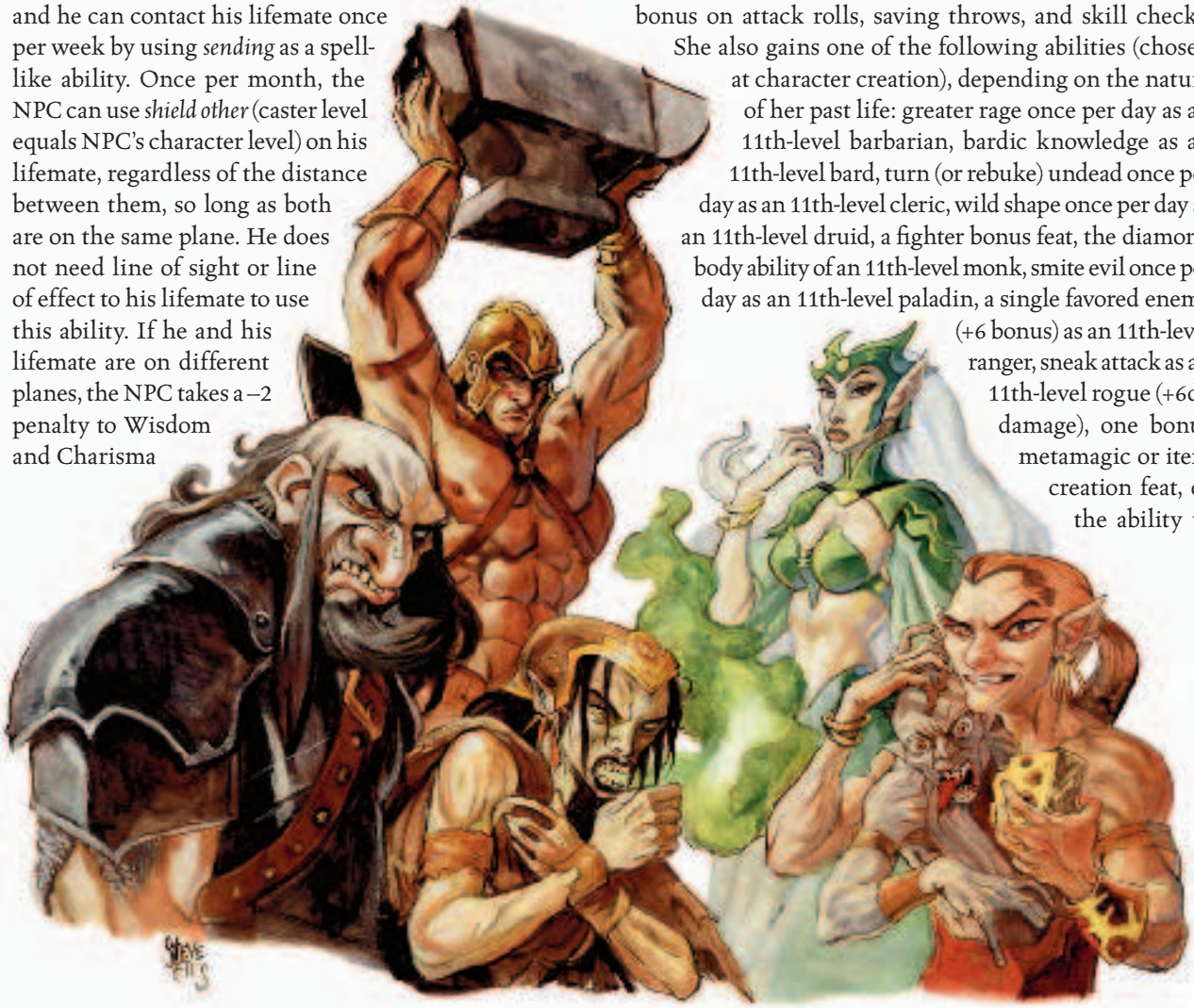
Gravetouched (Su): The NPC was born alive from an undead mother and somehow survived to adulthood. He has immunity to death effects and energy drain, and he can use *detect undead* as a spell-like ability (this ability is always active). The NPC's caster level equals his character level. In addition, he can command undead as an evil cleric of a level equal to his character level, and he can use *animate dead* and *create undead* as spell-like abilities, each once per week (caster level equals NPC's character level).

Guardian Spirit (Su): The NPC is protected by a helpful, watchful spirit—perhaps one of her ancestors, a benevolent outsider or fey spirit, or some other supernatural being. This spirit helps protect the NPC from harm by granting her a +2 deflection bonus to Armor Class.

Lifemate (Su): This NPC's soul is bonded to that of another NPC (or possibly even a PC) in a metaphysical analogy to the fleshly bond shared by conjoined twins. The NPC constantly knows his lifemate's state of health as if a *status* spell were continuously in operation, and he can contact his lifemate once per week by using *sending* as a spell-like ability. Once per month, the NPC can use *shield other* (caster level equals NPC's character level) on his lifemate, regardless of the distance between them, so long as both are on the same plane. He does not need line of sight or line of effect to his lifemate to use this ability. If he and his lifemate are on different planes, the NPC takes a –2 penalty to Wisdom and Charisma until he is once again on the same plane as his lifemate. Typically, the bond shared between the two individuals is felt equally, but occasionally an NPC's lifemate does not have this ability and can go for many years without even knowing that such a bond exists.

Naturebond (Su): The NPC has always had an unexplainable bond with nature, and she can call upon the natural world to do her bidding. She is most at home in natural surroundings and quickly becomes irritable and foul-mouthed in urban areas. Because of her connection to nature, the NPC can use *speak with animals* and *speak with plants* at will as spell-like abilities (caster level equals the NPC's character level). She can also use the following spells as spell-like abilities (caster level equals the NPC's character level; save DC 10 + 1/2 NPC's character level + NPC's Cha modifier), each once per week: *command plants, summon nature's ally V, transport via plants.*

Past Life (Su): The NPC has recalled a past life in which she might have been a monarch, a tyrant, a great hero, a villain, or even a person from an entirely different world. Because of this link to her past self, she gains a +2 insight bonus on attack rolls, saving throws, and skill checks. She also gains one of the following abilities (chosen at character creation), depending on the nature of her past life: greater rage once per day as an 11th-level barbarian, bardic knowledge as an 11th-level bard, turn (or rebuke) undead once per day as an 11th-level cleric, wild shape once per day as an 11th-level druid, a fighter bonus feat, the diamond body ability of an 11th-level monk, smite evil once per day as an 11th-level paladin, a single favored enemy (+6 bonus) as an 11th-level ranger, sneak attack as an 11th-level rogue (+6d6 damage), one bonus metamagic or item creation feat, or the ability to



Unique abilities give these NPCs special flavor (from left): an abysmally wretched dwarf, a human prodigy with amazing strength, a halfling spore carrier, a half-elf with unearthly beauty, a gnome with a vestigial twin

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use one 5th-level sorcerer spell as a spell-like ability once per day.

Poisonlaced (Ex): A strange, brightly colored insect or spider poisoned the NPC when he was a child. Ever since, he has been able to sense the presence of poison and has had nothing to fear from it. The NPC can use *detect poison* as a spell-like ability. This ability is always active, and the NPC's caster level equals his character level. The NPC also has immunity to poison.

Prodigy (Ex): The NPC might be shockingly strong, amazingly dexterous, disturbingly intelligent, stupendously hearty, unusually wise, or preternaturally attractive. She gains a +2 bonus to one of her ability scores and an additional +4 bonus on any of her check modifiers that are based on that ability (including ability checks and skill checks), improving those modifiers by a total of +5.

Prophet (Su): The NPC was born on a day of great astronomical significance. His eyes are solid white with no pupils, yet he can still see as a normal creature of his race. In times of distress, he often has strange visions that duplicate the effect of an *augury* spell (caster level 20th). If the NPC wishes to have a vision relating to a specific topic, he can use *divination* as a spell-like ability once per week (caster level 20th), but if he does so, he gains two negative levels, which last for 24 hours. The NPC constantly functions as if affected by a *foresight* spell (caster level 20th).

Spore Carrier (Su): The ship on which the NPC and her parents traveled from their homeland sank near a barren island, killing everyone except her. The NPC was forced to subsist on strange, pallid fungi—the only form of nutrition available on the island. She was eventually rescued, but she has had a compelling desire to return to the island ever since.

The fungus that the NPC consumed infected her with supernatural spores, which grant her complete protection from hit point damage and ability damage dealt by fungi and oozes, including green slime and dangerous molds. Three times per day, as a standard action, she can cough up a dense cloud of pale spores into a single adjacent 5-foot square. The spore cloud remains in this square for a number of rounds equal to her character level, or until dispersed by a strong wind. Any creature passing through this cloud must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 NPC's character level + NPC's Con modifier) or take 1d4 points of Constitution damage. A new saving throw is required for each round of exposure. A creature reduced to 0 Constitution by these spores dies, and its body immediately bursts open, revealing a colony of strange, pallid fungus. If the spore carrier NPC is within 30 feet and fails a DC 15 Will save, she is compelled to take a standard action to eat the fungus.

Stormtouched (Su): The NPC was born at the height of a supernaturally powerful thunderstorm. While his mother was giving birth, his home was struck repeatedly by lightning. The house took no damage, but his mother perished. Because of this event, the NPC bears a jagged birthmark somewhere on his body.

The NPC has immunity to electricity, and any attack that deals such damage heals 1 point of damage for each 3 points of damage that it would otherwise deal. This healing does not allow the character to exceed his full normal hit points. The NPC can also use *call lightning storm* and *control weather* as spell-like abilities (caster level equals the NPC's character level; save DC 10 + 1/2 NPC's character level + NPC's Cha modifier), each once per week.

Unearthly Beauty (Su): The NPC's beauty is shocking, granting her a +4 bonus on all Charisma-based checks. In addition, she can use *dominate monster* once per week (caster level equals NPC's character level; save DC 10 + 1/2 NPC's character level + NPC's Cha modifier). The NPC can maintain only one *dominate* effect at a time; if she dominates a new creature while she still has one under her control, the previously *dominated* creature is freed.

Vestigial Twin (Ex): The NPC was born with a vestigial head and possibly one or two atrophied arms or legs—the remains of a twin that only partially formed. The vestigial head grows from some point on the NPC's body and has its own personality and voice. Once per round, this second head can take an additional standard action independent of the actions taken by the rest of the body. This action must be chosen from the following list: casting a spell known to the NPC (verbal component only), activating a spell-like ability possessed by the NPC, activating a magic item, or attempting a skill check or ability check based on a mental ability score (Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma).

SAMPLE COMPLEX NPCS

The sample NPCs given on pages 110–126 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* are invaluable to busy DMs who don't have time to generate statistics for every NPC in their campaigns. Yet these tables don't help in every situation. In particular, they don't offer multiclass NPCs or characters with prestige classes.

Each of these characters represents a classic multiclass or prestige class archetype, and they can be used in a pinch with little or no adjustment. All these NPCs are human, but you can change a character's race with relative ease by removing the feat and skill ranks indicated in each character's description and using the information on pages 126–127 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Most of these NPCs are fairly high in level, primarily because as complex NPCs who often have unexpected combinations of classes, they tend to be more memorable than standard single-class NPCs. Thus, they make excellent recurring villains, powerful allies, or leaders of organizations.

The statistics blocks on the next twelve pages are presented in a new format. Details of the format are described on page 173.

ANTIPALADIN (EL 14)

The antipaladin's talents don't lend themselves well to the role of minion, so he is best used as a villainous leader. In a high-level game, however, he could adopt a lesser role, serving as a specialist in the service of an evil church, as the general of a corrupt king's army, or as a member of an elite force of antipaladin shock troops in the employ of a demon lord or archdevil.

ANTIPALADIN **CR 14**

Human paladin 7/blackguard 7
LE, NE, or CE Medium humanoid
Init –1; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Aura despair (10 ft., –2 on saves)
Languages Common, empathic link

AC 25, touch 10, flat-footed 25
hp 91 (14 HD)
Fort +14, **Ref** +6, **Will** +9

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee *+1 unholy longsword* +19/+14/+9 (1d8+4/19–20 plus poison) or
+1 unholy longsword +17/+12/+7 (1d8+4/19–20 plus poison) and
shield bash +16 (1d6+1) or
Ranged shield spines +14 (1d10/19–20)
Base Atk +14; **Grp** +17
Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack, poison (Large scorpion venom, DC 18, 1d6 Str/1d6 Str), smite good 4/day (+3 attack, +7 damage), sneak attack +3d6
Special Actions command undead 6/day (+5, 2d6+8, 5th), lay on hands 21 points/day
Blackguard Spells Prepared (CL 7th):
3rd—*contagion* (DC 15)
2nd—*cure moderate wounds, death knell* (DC 14)
1st—*cure light wounds, doom* (DC 13), *inflict light wounds* (+17 melee touch, DC 13)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th):
At will—*detect good*
1/day—*summon monster I* (evil only; CL 14th)

Abilities Str 17, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 16
SQ aura of evil, dark blessing, fiendish servant, poison use, share spells
Feats Cleave, Improved Shield Bash, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longsword)
Skills Diplomacy +20, Hide +5, Jump –15, Knowledge (religion) +5, Ride +11
Possessions *+3 full plate armor, spined shield, +1 unholy longsword, gauntlets of ogre power, amulet of natural armor +1, ring of protection +1*, 5 doses of Large scorpion venom, 5 doses of giant wasp poison (DC 18, 1d6 Dex/1d6 Dex), silver unholy symbol, 30 pp, 60 gp

Nonhuman Antipaladin: Remove all ranks in Diplomacy (changing the modifier to Diplomacy +3). Remove Weapon Focus (longsword).

FIENDISH HEAVY WARHORSE SERVANT **CR —**

LE, NE, or CE Large magical beast (augmented animal)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +7, Spot +6
Languages empathic link, speak with blackguard

AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 16
hp 60 (8 HD); **DR** 5/magic
Resist cold 10, fire 10; improved evasion; **SR** 13
Fort +16, **Ref** +8, **Will** +8

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)
Melee 2 hooves +10 (1d8+5) and bite +5 (1d4+2)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +15
Atk Options smite good 1/day (+8 damage to good foe)

Abilities Str 20, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 7, Wis 13, Cha 6
Feats Endurance, Improved Natural Attack (hoof), Run
Skills Jump +25, Listen +7, Spot +6

Illus. by M. Cotie

Antipaladin

ARCANE MERCENARY (EL 11)

The arcane mercenary can represent any fighter who seeks to augment his martial skills with arcane magic. He could be a specialized bodyguard, a guard at a wizard's guild, or an adventurer seeking his fortune.

ARCANE MERCENARY **CR 11**

Human fighter 5/sorcerer 6
LN Medium humanoid
Init +2; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common, empathic link

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13
hp 61 (11 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee *+1 longsword* +12/+7 (1d8+5/19–20) or
Ranged mwk composite longbow +11/+6 (1d8+2/×3)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +10
Atk Options Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot
Combat Gear *wand of magic missiles* (5th), *potion of barkskin* (+3), 4 *potions of cure light wounds*
Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 6th, 5% arcane spell failure chance):
3rd (4/day)—*heroism*
2nd (6/day)—*blindness/deafness* (DC 16), *bull's strength*
1st (7/day)—*enlarge person*, *mage armor*, *mount*, *ray of enfeeblement* (+10 ranged touch)
0 (6/day)—*acid splash* (+10 ranged touch), *detect magic*, *light*, *mending*, *ray of frost* (+10 ranged touch), *read magic*, *resistance*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 18
SQ familiar, share spells
Feats Alertness[B] (if familiar within 5 ft.), Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Iron Will, Point Blank Shot[B], Precise Shot[B], Still Spell, Weapon Focus (longsword)[B], Weapon Specialization (longsword)
Skills Concentration +5, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Listen +1, Ride +10, Spellcraft +11, Spot +1
Possessions combat gear plus *+2 buckler*, *+1 longsword*, masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) with 20 arrows, *cloak of Charisma +2*, 44 gp

Nonhuman Arcane Mercenary: Remove all ranks in Knowledge (arcana). (This skill then becomes unusable, since the arcane mercenary is untrained in it.) The loss of these ranks removes the bonus from skill synergy on Spellcraft checks, reducing that modifier to +9. Remove Iron Will.

TOAD FAMILIAR **CR —**

N Diminutive magical beast (augmented animal)
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages empathic link, speak with master, speak with amphibians

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 17
hp 30 (6 HD)
Resist improved evasion
Fort +6, **Ref** +4, **Will** +8

Speed 5 ft. (1 square)
Melee —
Space 1 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Base Atk +8; **Grp** –9
Atk Options deliver touch spells

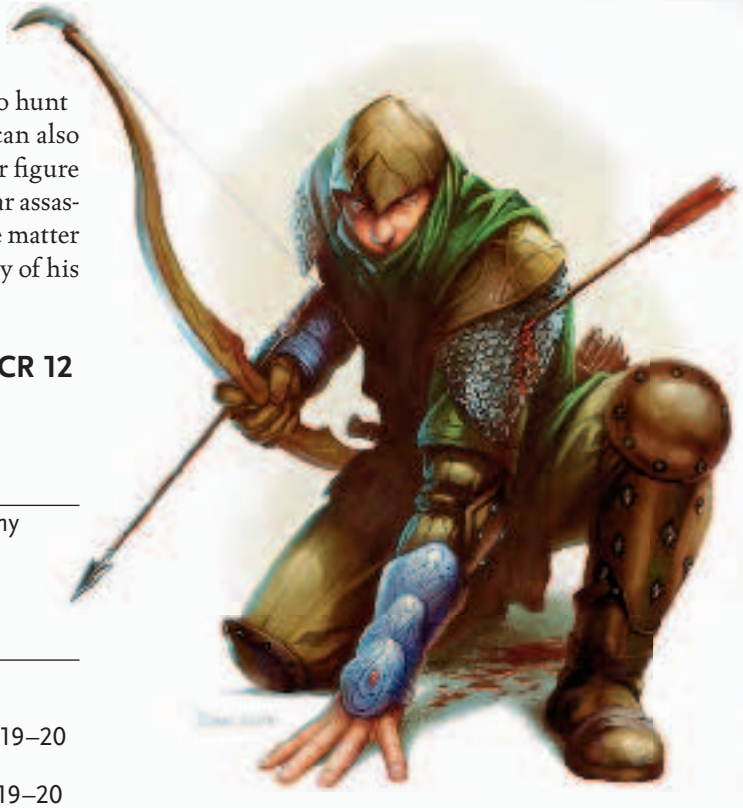
Abilities Str 1, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 4
SQ amphibious
Feats Alertness
Skills Concentration +4, Hide +21, Intimidate +5, Listen +4, Ride +9, Spot +4

Illus. by W. O'Connor

Arcane mercenary

BOUNTY HUNTER (EL 12)

The bounty hunter works best as a specialized stalker who has been hired by the PCs' enemies to hunt them down and either kill or capture them. He can also serve as the master of a thieves' guild, or a sinister figure who has information the PCs need. This particular assassin specializes in slaying humans, but it's a simple matter to change his favored enemy (and the bane quality of his longbow) if desired.



Bounty hunter

Illus. by D. Scott

BOUNTY HUNTER **CR 12**

Human ranger 3/rogue 4/assassin 5
LE, NE, or CE Medium humanoid
Init +3; **Senses** Listen +14, Spot +14
Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 19; improved uncanny dodge, uncanny dodge
hp 60 (12 HD)
Resist evasion
Fort +6 (+8 against poison), **Ref** +14, **Will** +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk rapier +13/+8 (1d6 plus poison) or
Ranged *+1 human bane longbow* +14/+9 (1d8+1/19–20 plus poison) or
+1 human bane longbow +12/+12/+7 (1d8+1/19–20 plus poison) with Rapid Shot
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +9
Atk Options Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, death attack (DC 17), favored enemy humans +2, poison (black adder venom, DC 11, 1d6 Con/1d6 Con), sneak attack +5d6
Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*
Assassin Spells Known (CL 5th):
2nd (3/day)—*cat's grace*, *invisibility*, *pass without trace*
1st (4/day)—*disguise self*, *feather fall*, *jump*, *true strike*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 8, Cha 14
SQ poison use, trap sense +1, trapfinding, wild empathy +5 (+1 magical beasts)
Feats Endurance[B], Improved Critical (longbow), Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot[B], Skill Focus (Survival), Track[B], Weapon Finesse
Skills Climb +19, Disguise +10, Gather Information +10, Handle Animal +8, Hide +22, Jump +14, Listen +14, Move Silently +17, Ride +5, Search +22, Spot +14, Survival +8 (+15 following tracks)
Possessions combat gear plus *+2 shadow chain shirt*, *+1 human bane longbow* with 20 arrows, masterwork rapier, *ring of climbing*, *lens of detection*, *lesser bracers of archery*, 5 doses of black adder venom, 2 doses of dark reaver powder (ingested, DC 18, 2d6 Con/1d6 Con + 1d6 Str), 30 pp, 5 gp

Death Attack Sneak attack can kill target or paralyze it for 1d6+5 rounds (Fort DC 17 negates).

Nonhuman Bounty Hunters: Remove all ranks in Jump (changing the modifier to Jump –1). Remove Iron Will.

CULTIST (EL 6)

For low-level play, a cultist can be the organizing force of a hidden cult dedicated to some forgotten god. For higher-level play, the cultist makes a good minion for a powerful dragon, undead, outsider, or elemental seeking to establish a cult of its own. She could even be a local priest who just happens to belong to a thieves' guild.

Not all cultists are evil; a cult of lawful neutral inevitable-worshiping maniacs can be just as creepy and menacing as a cult of demon worshipers. Alternatively, in an area where the bad guys hold all the power, cultists such as this one could be worshipers of a good deity who have been forced to live secret lives in the hidden corners of a debased and hateful society.

The NPC presented here happens to be a cultist of Nerull. If you wish to make a cultist for a different deity, just change the character's domains and alignment as appropriate. However, if you drop the Trickery domain in favor of another, the cultist's Bluff modifier decreases by 3, since Bluff is no longer a class skill for her.

Illus. by R. Gallegos

A cultist of Nerull

CULTIST **CR 6**

Human cleric 3/rogue 3
NE Medium humanoid
Init +0; **Senses** Listen +6, Spot +6
Languages Common

AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13
hp 36 (6 HD)
Resist evasion
Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee *+1 scythe* +7 (2d4+2/×4)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +5
Atk Options sneak attack +2d6
Special Actions command undead 4/day (+1, 2d6+4, 3rd), death touch 1/day (3d6)
Combat Gear *potion of pass without trace*, *potion of sanctuary*
Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 3rd):
2nd—*enthrall* (DC 15), *invisibility*[D], *undetectable alignment*
1st—*cause fear*[D] (DC 14), *command* (DC 14), *cure light wounds*, *obscuring mist*
0—*create water*, *cure minor wounds*, *guidance*, *mending*
D: Domain spell. Deity: Nerull. Domains: Death, Trickery

Abilities Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 16, Cha 12
SQ trap sense +1, trapfinding
Feats Combat Casting, Martial Weapon Proficiency (scythe), Skill Focus (Bluff), Weapon Focus (scythe)
Skills Bluff +13, Concentration +8, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +7 (+9 to act in character), Intimidate +3, Knowledge (local) +2, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +6, Spot +6, Use Rope +3
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 leather armor*, *+1 scythe*, *cloak of resistance +1*, *phylactery of faithfulness*, 40 gp

Nonhuman Cultist: Remove all ranks in Concentration (changing the modifier to Concentration +2) and Knowledge (local). (The latter skill then becomes unusable because the cultist is untrained in it.) Remove Skill Focus (Bluff).

GIANT SLAYER (EL 10)

The giant slayer can be either a lone hero who has dedicated his life to fighting giants, or a member of a highly trained force of giant-slaying specialists who protect the frontier. This NPC can become a slayer of some other creature type with relative ease; just change his favored enemies, the bane quality of his battleaxe, and the focus of his slaying arrow.

GIANT SLAYER (RAGING) — CR 10

Human barbarian 5/ranger 5
CG Medium humanoid
Init +2; **Senses** Listen +13, Spot +13
Languages Common, Giant

AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16; improved uncanny dodge, Two-Weapon Defense, uncanny dodge
hp 93 (10 HD); Diehard
Fort +11, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)
Melee *+1 giant bane battleaxe* +17/+12 (1d8+8/×3) or *+1 giant bane battleaxe* +15/+10 (1d8+6/×3) and mwk handaxe +14 (1d6+2/×3) or
Ranged mwk composite longbow +13/+8 (1d8+3/19–20)
Base Atk +10; **Grp** +15
Atk Options Power Attack, favored enemy giants +4, favored enemy magical beasts +2, rage 2/day (6 rounds)
Combat Gear *arrow of giant slaying*, 2 *potions of cure light wounds*

Abilities Str 20, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8
SQ animal companion, fast movement, link with companion, share spells, trap sense +1, wild empathy +6 (+2 magical beasts)
Feats Diehard, Endurance[B], Power Attack, Toughness, Track[B], Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting[B], Weapon Focus (battleaxe)
Skills Climb +17, Handle Animal +12, Jump +8, Knowledge (nature) +9, Listen +13, Ride +17, Spot +13, Survival +13 (+15 in aboveground natural environments)
Possessions combat gear plus *+2 chain shirt*, *+1 giant bane battleaxe*, masterwork handaxe, masterwork composite longbow (+3 Str bonus) with 20 arrows, 52 gp

Nonhuman Giant Slayer: Remove all ranks in Climb (changing the modifier to Climb +4 when raging). Remove Toughness.

When not raging, the giant slayer has the following changed statistics:
AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 18
hp 73 (10 HD)
Fort +9, **Will** +2
Melee *+1 giant bane battleaxe* +15/+10 (1d8+5/×3) or *+1 giant bane battleaxe* +13/+8 (1d8+4/×3) and mwk handaxe +12 (1d6+1/×3) or
Ranged mwk composite longbow +13/+8 (1d8+3/19–20)
Grp +13
Abilities Str 16, Con 13
Skills Climb +15, Jump +6

HEAVY WARHORSE ANIMAL COMPANION — CR —

N Large animal
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +5, Spot +4

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13
hp 30 (4 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2
Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)
Melee 2 hooves +6 (1d6+4) and bite +1 (1d6+2) and
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +11

Abilities Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6
SQ 1 bonus trick
Feats Endurance, Run
Skills Listen +5, Spot +4

Giant slayer

Illus. by S. Ellis

HIGH PRIEST (EL 20)

This NPC is the leader of some widespread, powerful religious organization. She could be the head of an order of benevolent guardians that protects a whole nation, or she might be the sinister overlord of a cruel theocracy.

This particular high priest is a cleric of Hextor. If you wish to make a high priest for a different deity, just change the character's domains and alignment as appropriate. However, an alignment change might alter her command undead and spontaneous spellcasting capabilities. Her prepared spells might also change, since a high priest who can spontaneously cast *cure* spells shouldn't have any of those prepared. You can replace this high priest's prepared *cure* spells most easily by just giving her two of some other spell at each level.

Every day, the high priest casts *greater magic weapon* on her heavy flail (increasing its enhancement bonus to +4) and uses her *magic vestment* spell-like ability on her shield and armor (increasing the enhancement bonus on each of those to +5). These extra bonuses are incorporated into the statistics block. If the high priest is encountered during the 6 hours of each day when these spells aren't active (typically while she sleeps), or if the spells are dispelled, adjust her Armor Class, attack bonus, and weapon damage bonuses appropriately.

High Priest — CR 20

Human cleric 17/hierophant 3
LE Medium humanoid
Init –1; **Senses** Listen +9, Spot +9
Languages Common, Infernal

AC 32, touch 13, flat-footed 32
hp 94 (20 HD)
Fort +15, **Ref** +7, **Will** +24

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee *+4 speed unholy heavy flail* +22/+22/+17/+12 (1d10+10/17–20)
Base Atk +13; **Grp** +17
Atk Options smite 1/day (+4 attack, +17 damage), divine reach
Special Actions command undead 5/day (+4, 2d6+19, 17th), spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells)
Combat Gear *pearl of power* (3rd-level spell), *wand of cure moderate wounds* (34 charges), *wand of searing light* (6th level, 19 charges), scroll of *heal*

Spells Prepared (CL 20th):
9th—*miracle*, *power word kill*[D]
8th—extended *ethereal jaunt*, *fire storm* (DC 27), *power word stun*[D], *unholy aura* (DC 27)
7th—*blasphemy* (DC 26), quickened *cure serious wounds*, *destruction* (DC 26), *disintegrate*[D] (DC 26), quickened *searing light*
6th—quickened *death knell* (DC 21), *greater dispel magic*, *harm*[D] (DC 25), *heal*, *summon monster VI*, *word of recall*
5th—quickened *cure light wounds*, quickened *divine favor*, *flame strike*[D] (DC 24), *plane shift* (DC 24), *slay living* (DC 24), *spell resistance*, *true seeing*
4th—*cure critical wounds* (2), *death ward*, *divine power*[D], extended *protection from energy*, *greater magic weapon*†, *sending*, *tongues*
3rd—*blindness/deafness* (DC 22), *contagion*[D] (DC 22), *cure serious wounds* (2), extended *desecrate*, *dispel magic (2)*
2nd—*align weapon*, *cure moderate wounds* (2), *death knell* (DC 21), *hold person* (DC 21), *shatter*[D] (DC 21), *silence* (DC 21), *spiritual weapon*
1st—*bane* (DC 20), *command* (DC 20), *comprehend languages*, *cure light wounds* (3), *divine favor*, *inflict light wounds*[D] (DC 20), *sanctuary* (DC 20)
0—*cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*, *guidance* (2), *mending*, *read magic*
D: Domain spell. Deity: Hextor. *Domains*: Destruction, War
† Already cast.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th):
4/day—quickened *cure moderate wounds*
2/day—*magic vestment*†
† Already used.

Abilities Str 19, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 28, Cha 14
SQ aura of evil
Feats Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Extend Spell, Forge Ring, Improved Critical (heavy flail), Quicken Spell, Weapon Focus (heavy flail)[B]
Skills Concentration +23, Diplomacy +25, Knowledge (religion) +24, Spellcraft +24
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 half plate*, *+1 animated heavy steel shield*, *+1 speed unholy heavy flail*, *periapt of Wisdom +6*, *belt of giant strength +6*, *ring of freedom of movement*, *ring of protection +4*, *cloak of resistance +2*, *tome of understanding +2* (already read), scroll of *restoration*, silver holy symbol, 47 pp, 55 gp

Divine Reach (Su) Use touch spells to a range of 30 feet.

Nonhuman High Priest: Remove all ranks in Diplomacy (changing the modifier to Diplomacy +2). Remove Combat Casting.

A high priest of Hextor

Illus. by M. Phillippi

MARTIAL ARTIST (EL 10)

The martial artist is most often a wanderer who travels from town to town, seeking enlightenment or someone who can challenge his martial prowess. He could also be a teacher or a philosopher of combat—a mystical figure who lives in a remote location. Alternatively, several martial artists might belong to a secret or specialized band of assassins or thieves that controls a city from behind the scenes.

MARTIAL ARTIST (FIGHTER) **CR 10**

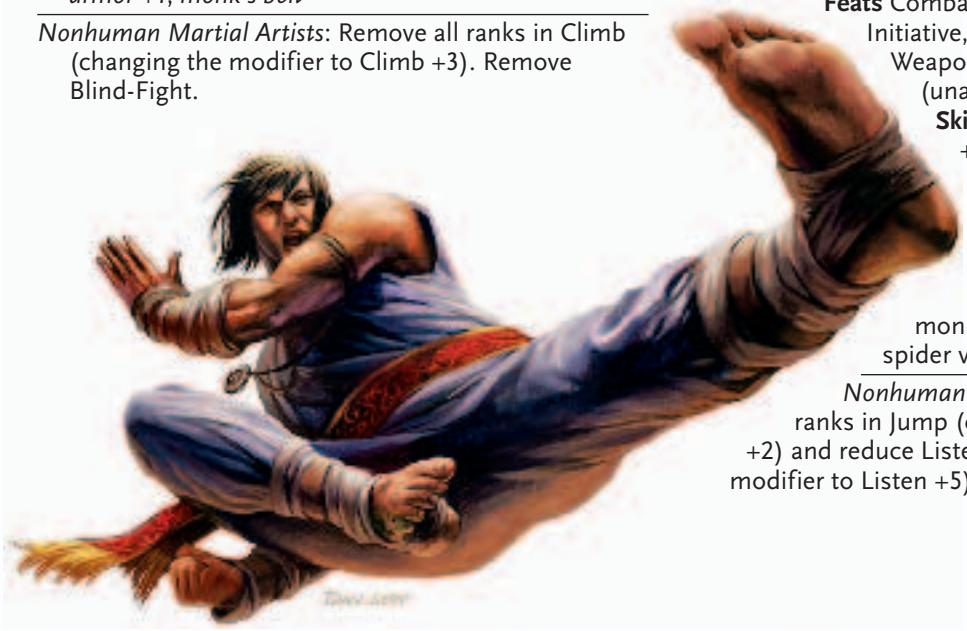
Human monk 5/fighter 5
LG, LN, or LE Medium humanoid
Init +2; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common

AC 18, touch 16, flat-footed 16; Dodge, Mobility
hp 59 (10 HD)
Immune normal disease
Resist evasion
Fort +9, **Ref** +7, **Will** +9 (+11 against enchantments)

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)
Melee unarmed strike +12/+7 (1d10+5) or unarmed strike +11/+11/+6 (1d10+5) with flurry of blows
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +11
Atk Options Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Stunning Fist 7/day (DC 17), *ki* strike (magic)

Abilities Str 16, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8
SQ fast movement, slow fall 20 ft.
Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes[B], Dodge[B], Iron Will, Mobility[B], Power Attack, Spring Attack[B], Stunning Fist[B], Weapon Focus (unarmed strike), Weapon Specialization (unarmed strike)
Skills Balance +12, Climb +16, Intimidate +4, Jump +22, Knowledge (religion) +8, Tumble +12
Possessions *amulet of natural armor +1*, *bracers of armor +1*, *monk's belt*

Nonhuman Martial Artists: Remove all ranks in Climb (changing the modifier to Climb +3). Remove Blind-Fight.



Martial artist

Variant Martial Artist

This version of the martial artist is of a sneakier persuasion. This monk might be a specialized scout for a monastery or a would-be assassin. More dexterous and nimble than the fighter martial artist, this individual seeks to sneak up on a foe and strike quickly from the shadows, relying on poison and sneak attack damage to incapacitate a foe. These martial artists are especially tough combatants in groups, where their tumbling ability, poison, and sneak attacks can be deadly.

MARTIAL ARTIST (ROGUE) **CR 10**

Human rogue 5/monk 5
LG, LN, or LE Medium humanoid
Init +8; **Senses** Listen +10, Spot +15
Languages Common

AC 18, touch 18, flat-footed 18; Dodge, Mobility, uncanny dodge
hp 60 (10 HD)
Immune normal disease
Resist evasion
Fort +7, **Ref** +12, **Will** +7 (+9 against enchantments)

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)
Melee unarmed strike +11/+6 (1d10) or mwk kama +11/+6 (1d6 plus poison) or unarmed strike +10/+10/+5 (1d10) with flurry of blows or mwk kama +10/+10/+5 (1d6 plus poison) with flurry of blows
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +6
Atk Options Combat Reflexes, Stunning Fist 7/day (DC 17), *ki* strike (magic), poison (DC 14, 1d4 Str/1d4 Str), sneak attack +3d6

Abilities Str 10, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 12
SQ fast movement, slow fall 20 ft., trap sense +1, trapfinding
Feats Combat Reflexes[B], Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Stunning Fist[B], Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)
Skills Balance +14, Escape Artist +12, Hide +17, Jump +10, Listen +10, Move Silently +17, Spot +15, Tumble +19, Use Rope +4 (+6 involving bindings)
Possessions masterwork kama, *gloves of Dexterity +2*, monk's belt, 6 doses of Medium spider venom

Nonhuman Martial Artists: Remove all ranks in Jump (changing the modifier to Jump +2) and reduce Listen ranks by 5 (changing the modifier to Listen +5). Remove Mobility.

Illus. by D. Scott

MASTER WIZARD (EL 18)

The master wizard can be the founder of a wizard's guild, the advisor to a king, a kindly and knowledgeable eccentric, or even a sinister and menacing villain for the characters to take on at the climax of the campaign.

The master wizard described here is chaotic neutral. If you change his alignment too drastically, you should change his familiar to a new creature that more closely matches his new alignment.

MASTER WIZARD **CR 18**

Human wizard 13/archmage 5
CN Medium humanoid
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *arcane sight, see invisibility;* Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, permanent *tongues,* empathic link

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AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 17
hp 83 (18 HD)
Resist contingent *fire shield* activates when damaged by a weapon
Fort +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +14

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk dagger +9/+4 (1d4/19–20) or
Ranged mwk dagger +11 (1d4/19–20)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +8
Atk Options mastery of shaping
Special Actions arcane fire
Combat Gear *lesser metamagic rod* (maximize), *lesser metamagic rod* (quicken), 2 *potions of bull's strength*
Spells Prepared (CL 18th):
9th—*dominate monster* (DC 27)
8th—*horrid wilting* (DC 25), maximized *cone of cold* (DC 23), *mind blank*
7th—*forcecage*, *insanity* (DC 25), *project image* (DC 24)
6th—maximized *fireball* (DC 21), *greater dispel magic*, *mass suggestion* (DC 24), *Tenser's transformation*
5th—*dominate person* (DC 23), feeblemind (DC 23), *teleport (2)*, *wall of force*
4th—*charm monster* (DC 22), *confusion* (DC 22), *stoneskin*, *wall of fire* (DC 22)
3rd—*fireball* (DC 21), *fly*, *hold person* (DC 21), *lightning bolt* (DC 21), *suggestion* (DC 21)
2nd—*cat's grace*, *darkness*, *darkvision*, *false life*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray* (+10 ranged touch), *see invisibility*, *shatter* (DC 20), *Tasha's hideous laughter* (DC 20), *touch of idiocy* (+8 melee touch)
1st—*burning hands* (DC 19), *charm person* (DC 19), *grease* (DC 18), *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (+10 ranged touch), *shield*
0—*daze* (DC 18), *flare* (DC 18), *mage hand*, *touch of fatigue* (+8 melee touch; DC 17)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th):
2/day—*dimension door*, *displacement*, *finger of death* (DC 24)

Abilities Str 10, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 24, Wis 12, Cha 8
SQ familiar, permanent *resistance* (included), *scry* on familiar, share spells
Feats Alertness[B] (if familiar is within 5 ft.), Combat Casting, Craft Rod[B], Craft Wondrous Item[B], Extend Spell, Improved Familiar, Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll[B], Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Focus (evocation)
Skills Concentration +23, Craft (alchemy) +28, Knowledge (arcana) +28, Knowledge (geography) +14, Knowledge (history) +22, Knowledge (the planes) +28, Listen +3, Spellcraft +33, Spot +3
Possessions combat gear plus masterwork dagger, *bracers of armor +5*, *ring of protection +2*, *ring of wizardry II*, *headband of intellect +6*, *Heward's handy haversack*, *contingency* statuette worth 1,500 gp, 4 doses of granite/diamond dust (for *stoneskin* spell) worth 250 gp each, 19 pp, 8 gp
Spellbook spells prepared plus 0—*acid splash*, *arcane mark*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *disrupt undead*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mending*, *message*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*, *resistance;* 1st—*alarm*, *comprehend languages*, *hypnotism*, *identify*, *mage armor*, *shocking grasp*, *sleep*, *Tenser's floating disc;* 2nd—*arcane lock*, *continual flame*, *daze monster*, *flaming sphere*, *fox's cunning*, *gust of wind*, *rope trick;* 3rd—*arcane sight*, *daylight*, *dispel magic*, *displacement*, *heroism*, *Leomund's tiny hut*, *rage*, *stinking cloud*, *tongues*, *wind wall;* 4th—*crushing despair*, *dimension door*, *fire shield*, *ice storm*, *lesser geas*, *Otiluke's resilient sphere*, *shout*, *wall of ice;* 5th—*cone of cold*, *contact other plane*, *mind fog*, *permanency*, *lesser planar binding*, *sending*, *symbol of sleep*, *telekinesis;* 6th—*chain lightning*, *contingency*, *geas/quest*, *greater heroism*, *symbol of persuasion;* 7th—*delayed blast fireball*, *finger of death*, *mass hold person*, *power word blind*, *symbol of stunning;* 8th—*dimensional lock*, *horrid wilting*, *polar ray*, *symbol of insanity;* 9th—*meteor swarm*, *power word kill*, *wish*

Arcane Fire (Su) +10 ranged touch, 600 ft. range, deals 5d6 damage +1d6 per spell level used to create.
Mastery of Shaping (Su) Alter burst, cone, cylinder, emanation, or spread spells so as to leave one or more "holes" in the area or effect. Those within such holes are not subject to the spell's effect. Each hole must be at least a 5-foot cube. Any shapeable spell has a minimum dimension of 5 feet instead of 10 feet.

Nonhuman Master Wizard: Remove all ranks in Craft (alchemy). (This skill then becomes unusable because the master wizard is untrained in it.) Remove Combat Casting.

QUASIT, IMPROVED FAMILIAR **CR —**

CE Tiny outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar)
Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +7, Spot +7
Languages Common, Abyssal, empathic link

AC 25, touch 15, flat-footed 22
hp 42 (18 HD); fast healing 2; **DR** 5/cold iron or good
Immune poison
Resist fire 10; improved evasion; **SR** 18
Fort +5, **Ref** +8, **Will** +13

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 40 ft. (perfect)
Melee 2 claws +13 (1d3–1 plus poison) and bite +8 (1d4–1 plus poison)
Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Base Atk +8; **Grp** –1
Atk Options deliver touch spells, poison (DC 19, 1d4 Dex/2d4 Dex)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th):
At will—*detect good*, *detect magic*, *invisibility* (self only)
1/day—*cause fear* (as the spell, but 30-foot radius; DC 11)
1/week—*commune* (6 questions; CL 12th)

Abilities Str 8, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10
SQ alternate form (as *polymorph*, CL 12th, into bat or monstrous centipede form)
Feats Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse
Skills Bluff +6, Concentration +21, Craft (alchemy) +22, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +0 (+2 acting), Hide +17, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (the planes) +22, Listen +7, Move Silently +9, Search +7, Spellcraft +22, Spot +7
Improved Evasion (Ex) No damage on successful Reflex save and half damage if the save fails.

Master wizard

Master Specialist

You can make encounters with wizards distinctive from one another by varying many factors, one of which is spell selection. One way to quickly gain a grasp of a particular wizard's choice of spells is to make her a specialist. An encounter with an enchanter as opposed to a necromancer is a completely different experience, much like fighting a dragon as opposed to a goblin. While both wizards hurl mighty spells at your PCs, their effects, and the PCs' preparation for them, result in a radically different encounter. Consider this alternative spell list and spellbook for the master wizard, both for a conjurer NPC.

Spells Prepared (CL 18th; prohibited schools illusion and necromancy):
9th—*dominate monster* (DC 26), *summon monster IX*[AS]
8th—*incendiary cloud* (DC 26), maximized *cone of cold* (DC 22), *mind blank*, *summon monster VIII*[AS]
7th—*forcecage*, *insanity* (DC 24), *prismatic spray* (DC 24), *summon monster VII*[AS]
6th—*acid fog*, maximized *fireball* (DC 20), *greater dispel magic*, *summon monster VI*[AS], *wall of iron*
5th—*cloudkill* (DC 23), *feeblemind* (DC 22), *summon monster V*[AS], *teleport* (2), *wall of force*
4th—*charm monster* (DC 21), *confusion* (DC 21), dimension door, Evard's black tentacles, stoneskin
3rd—*fireball* (DC 20), *fly*, *hold person* (DC 20), *lightning bolt* (DC 20), *stinking cloud* (DC 21), *suggestion* (DC 20)
2nd—*cat's grace*, *darkness*, *darkvision*, *fog cloud*, *glitterdust*, *scorching ray* (2) (+10 ranged touch), *see invisibility*, *Melf's acid arrow*, *Tasha's hideous laughter* (DC 19), *web* (DC 20)
1st—*charm person* (DC 18), *grease* (2) (DC 19), *magic missile* (2), *shield* (2)
0—*acid splash*, *daze* (DC 17), *detect magic* (2), *read magic*
AS: Spells affected by the Augment Summoning feat

Feats Replace Spell Focus (enchantment) and Spell Focus (evocation) with Spell Focus (conjuration) and Augment Summoning

Spellbook spells prepared plus 0—*arcane mark*, *dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect poison*, *flare*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*, *resistance*; 1st—*alarm*, *detect secret doors*, *endure elements*, *enlarge person*, *feather fall*, *identify*, *mage armor*, *summon monster I*; 2nd—*arcane lock*, *continual flame*, *daze monster*, *fox's cunning*, *rope trick*, *shatter*, *summon swarm*; 3rd—*blink*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *deep slumber*, *dispel magic*, *gaseous form*, *haste*, *keen edge*, *phantom steed*, *protection from energy*, *summon monster III*, *water breathing*; 4th—*crushing despair*, *detect scrying*, *dimensional anchor*, *ice storm*, *polymorph*, *solid fog*, *stone shape*, *summon monster IV*; 5th—*baleful polymorph*, *break enchantment*, *dominate person*, *hold person*, *major creation*, *mind fog*, *overland flight*, *Rary's telepathic bond*; 6th—*chain lightning*, *disintegrate*, *globe of invulnerability*, *legend lore*, *planar binding*; 7th—*greater teleport*, *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion*, *phase door*, *plane shift*, *reverse gravity*; 8th—*greater planar binding*, *maze*, *Otto's irresistible dance*, *sunburst*; 9th—*gate*, *meteor swarm*, *wish*

Illus. by M. Cotie

MASTERMIND (EL 14)

The mastermind moves behind the scenes. She can be the ruler of a thieves' guild, the benevolent ruler of a city-state, or a sinister figure who manipulates a nation from the shadows. A mastermind makes an excellent campaign villain because diligent PCs can discover that she is the motivating force behind several seemingly unconnected adventures. Alternatively, she could be a hidden ally for the PCs—an NPC who knows much and can help the characters with their tasks, but would prefer to remain anonymous.

MASTERMIND **CR 14**

Human rogue 7/bard 7
N Medium humanoid
Init +2; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common, Elven, Halfling

AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 22; uncanny dodge
hp 42 (14 HD)
Resist evasion
Fort +3, **Ref** +12, **Will** +8

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee *+1 spell storing rapier* +13/+8 (1d6+1/15–20)
Base Atk +10; **Grp** +10
Atk Options Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Improved Feint, sneak attack +4d6
Special Actions bardic music 7/day (*suggestion* [DC 17], inspire competence, inspire courage +1, *fascinate* 3 creatures, countersong)
Combat Gear *figurine of wondrous power (silver raven)*, *wand of cat's grace* (45 charges), scroll of *teleport*, scroll of *fly*
Bard Spells Known (CL 7th, 5% arcane spell failure chance):
3rd (1/day)—*glibness*, *lesser geas* (DC 17)
2nd (3/day)—*cure moderate wounds*, *detect thoughts* (DC 16), *suggestion* (DC 16), *tongues*
1st (4/day)—*charm person* (DC 15), *disguise self*, *silent image* (DC 15), *undetectable alignment*
0 (3/day)—*daze* (DC 14), *flare* (DC 14), *ghost sound* (DC 14), *mage hand*, *message*, *read magic*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 15, Con 8, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 18
SQ bardic knowledge +9, trap sense +2, trapfinding
Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Improved Critical (rapier), Improved Feint, Persuasive, Weapon Finesse
Skills Bluff +26, Diplomacy +28, Disguise +24 (+26 to act in character), Forgery +12, Gather Information +24, Intimidate +24, Knowledge (local) +19, Move Silently +5, Perform (oratory) +24, Sense Motive +18, Sleight of Hand +13, Use Magic Device +24
Possessions combat gear plus *+2 glamered shadow elven chain*, *+1 light steel shield*, *+1 spell storing rapier (cure serious wounds)*, *cloak of Charisma +2*, *amulet of natural armor +1*, *boots of elvenkind*, *Heward's handy haversack*, *circlet of persuasion,* scroll of *speak with dead*, 65 pp, 46 gp

Nonhuman Mastermind: Remove all ranks in Knowledge (local). (This skill then becomes unusable, since the mastermind is untrained in it.) Remove Combat Reflexes.

Illus. by E. Fiegenschuh

Mastermind

TRIBAL SHAMAN (EL 13)

A tribal shaman is most often the religious or spiritual leader for a tribe of barbarians. However, he could just as easily be a reclusive nomad or the leader of a band of barbaric mercenaries.

TRIBAL SHAMAN (RAGING) **CR 13**

Human barbarian 6/druid 7
Any nonlawful Medium humanoid
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +19, Spot +3
Languages Common

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15; improved uncanny dodge, uncanny dodge
hp 109 (13 HD)
Resist +4 against spell-like abilities of fey
Fort +13, **Ref** +5, **Will** +12

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); woodland stride
Melee *+1 greataxe* +16/+11/+6 (1d12+7/×3)
Base Atk +11; **Grp** +15
Atk Options Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, rage 2/day (7 rounds)
Special Actions wild shape 3/day (7 hours)
Combat Gear *potion of shield of faith* (+4), *potion of cure moderate wounds*
Druid Spells Prepared (CL 7th):
4th—*flame strike* (DC 17)
3rd—*cure moderate wounds*, *greater magic fang*, *poison* (DC 16)
2nd—*bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *resist energy*, *spider climb*
1st—*cure light wounds* (2), *longstrider*, *produce flame* (+12 ranged touch, +13 melee touch), *speak with animals*
0—*cure minor wounds*, *detect poison*, *guidance*, *mending*, *purify food and drink*, *virtue*

Abilities Str 19, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 8, Wis 17, Cha 10
SQ animal companion, fast movement, link with companion, trackless step, trap sense +2, wild empathy +9 (+5 magical beasts)
Feats Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Improved Bull Rush, Lightning Reflexes, Natural Spell, Power Attack
Skills Handle Animal +16, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (nature) +8, Listen +19, Ride +3, Survival +19 (+21 in aboveground natural environments)
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 wild hide armor*, *+1 greataxe*, *amulet of natural armor +1*, *dusty rose prism ioun stone*, 15 gp

Nonhuman Tribal Shaman: Remove all ranks in Listen (changing the modifier to Listen +3). Remove Combat Casting.

When the tribal shaman is not raging, the following changes apply to the above statistics.

Tribal shaman

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 17
hp 83 (13 HD)
Fort +11, **Will** +10
Melee *+1 greataxe* +14/+9/+4 (1d12+4/×3)
Grp +13
Abilities Str 15, Con 13

DEINONYCHUS ANIMAL COMPANION **CR —**

N Large animal
Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +10, Spot +10

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 14
hp 34 (4 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

Speed 60 ft. (12 squares)
Melee talons +6 (2d6+4) and 2 foreclaws +1 (1d3+2) and bite +1 (2d4+2)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +11

Abilities Str 19, Dex 15, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10
SQ 1 bonus trick
Feats Run, Track
Skills Hide +8, Jump +26, Listen +10, Spot +10, Survival +10

Illus. by B. Hagan

UNDEAD MASTER (EL 17)

The undead mster is a classic villain—perhaps the leader of an undead nation or the scion of a sinister cult. She can command undead both as a cleric and as a sorcerer (by using the *command undead* spell), and she can cast *animate dead* as both a cleric and sorcerer. Thus, the total number of undead minions she can command is staggering. She often uses her *portable hole* to transport minions during the day or to smuggle them through enemy territory.

The undead master described here is a worshiper of Wee Jas. If you wish to make an undead master devoted to a different deity, change the character's domains and alignment as appropriate.

Undead master

Illus. by V. Rams

Undead Master CR 17

Human cleric 3/sorcerer 4/mystic theurge 10
LE Medium humanoid
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +10, Spot +7
Languages Common, empathic link

AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 18
hp 97 (17 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +19

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk dagger +9/+4 (1d4–1/19–20) or
Ranged mwk dagger +11 (1d4–1/19–20)
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +8
Special Actions command undead 8/day (+7, 2d6+8, 3rd), death touch 1/day (3d6)
Combat Gear *boots of levitation*, *staff of necromancy* (42 charges), *wand of enervation* (31 charges), *wand of cure moderate wounds* (39 charges), *wand of inflict serious wounds* (22 charges)
Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 13th):
7th—*destruction*[D] (DC 24), *ethereal jaunt*
6th—*antilife shell*, *create undead*[D], *harm* (DC 23)
5th—stilled *freedom of movement*, *insect plague*, *slay living*[D] (DC 22), *spell resistance*, *unhallow*
4th—*cure critical wounds*, *death ward*, *giant vermin*, *greater magic weapon*, *order's wrath*[D] (DC 19; CL 14th), *spell immunity*
3rd—*animate dead*[D], *contagion* (DC 20), *cure serious wounds*, *magic vestment*, *protection from energy*, *speak with dead* (DC 20)
2nd—*bear's endurance*, *cure moderate wounds* (2), *death knell*[D] (DC 19), *desecrate*, *shatter* (DC 17), *spiritual weapon*
1st—*command* (DC 16), *cure light wounds* (2), *deathwatch*, *detect undead*, *hide from undead*, *magic stone*, *protection from chaos*[D] (CL 14th)
0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *detect magic*, *guidance*, *mending*, *read magic*
D: Domain spell. Deity: Wee Jas. Domains: Death, Law
Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 14th, 15% arcane spell failure chance):
7th (3/day)—*control undead* (DC 24)
6th (5/day)—*create undead*, *veil* (DC 21)
5th (7/day)—*magic jar* (DC 22), *nightmare* (DC 20), *teleport* (DC 20)
4th (7/day)—*animate dead*, *dimension door*, *enervation* (+10 ranged touch), *stoneskin*
3rd (7/day)—*gaseous form*, *gentle repose*, *stinking cloud* (DC 18), *vampiric touch* (+8 melee touch; DC 20)
2nd (7/day)—*command undead* (DC 19), *darkvision*, *false life*, *ghoul touch* (+8 melee touch; DC 19), *spectral hand*
1st (8/day)—*charm person* (DC 16), *chill touch* (+8 melee touch; DC 18), *endure elements*, *ray of enfeeblement* (+10 ranged touch), *sleep* (DC 16)
0 (6/day)—*arcane mark*, *dancing lights*, *disrupt undead* (+10 ranged touch), *ghost sound* (DC 15), *mage hand*, *message*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *touch of fatigue* (+8 melee touch; DC 17)

Abilities Str 8, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 20, Cha 21
SQ familiar, share spells
Feats Alertness[B] (if familiar is within 5 ft.), Combat Casting, Craft Staff, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Greater Spell Focus (necromancy), Spell Focus (necromancy), Still Spell
Skills Concentration +21, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (religion) +14, Listen +10, Spellcraft +16, Spot +7
Possessions combat gear plus *+2 studded leather armor*, *ring of force shield* (included), *ring of protection +1*, masterwork dagger, *cloak of Charisma +4*, *periapt of Wisdom +4*, *portable hole*, black onyx gems (2,000 gp value total, for *animate dead* and *create undead*), 2 doses granite and diamond dust (worth 250 gp each, for *stoneskin*), 98 gp

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Nonhuman Undead Master: Remove all ranks in Concentration (changing the modifier to Concentration +1). Remove Combat Casting.

READING THE STATISTICS BLOCK

The new statistics block format is divided into four main sections, which are separated by horizontal lines. Each section serves a specific purpose, so you will need to reference different sections at different times during an encounter. The sections are as follows, from top to bottom.

Identification and Encounter

The top section identifies the creature and gives the information you need at the start of an encounter.

Name: This word or phrase identifies the creature. Sometimes a number is given with the name to indicate how many creatures appear in the encounter.

CR: This value is the Challenge Rating of an individual creature of this kind.

Race, Class, and Level: This information is provided only for characters with class levels.

Alignment: The one- or two-letter abbreviation that appears here denotes the creature's alignment.

Size and Type: The creature's size category and its type (and subtype or subtypes, if applicable) are given here.

Init: This value is the creature's modifier on initiative checks.

Senses: The Senses entry indicates whether the creature has darkvision, low-light vision, scent, tremorsense, blindsense, blindsight, or some other sensory special quality. This information is followed by the creature's modifiers on Listen and Spot checks (even if the creature has no ranks in those skills).

Aura: Occasionally, a creature has a special ability that takes effect anytime another creature comes within a certain distance of it. Such abilities, such as a blackguard's aura of despair or a devil's fear aura, are detailed here.

Languages: This entry gives the languages the creature speaks or understands, as well as any special abilities relating to communication (such as telepathy or *tongues*) that it possesses.

Defensive Information

This section provides the information you need when characters are attacking the creature.

AC: This entry gives the creature's Armor Class against most regular attacks, followed by its AC against touch attacks (which disregard armor) and its AC when flat-footed (or at any other time when it is denied its Dexterity bonus to AC). If the creature has feats or other abilities that modify its Armor Class under specific circumstances (such as the Mobility feat), they are noted here as well as in the Feats entry.

hp: This entry consists of the creature's full normal hit point total (usually average rolls on each Hit Die), followed by the creature's Hit Dice in parentheses. If the creature has fast healing, regeneration, damage reduction (DR), or some other ability that affects the amount of damage it takes or the rate at which it regains hit points, that information also appears here.

Immune: Any immunities the creature has are indicated here. This includes immunity to specific types of energy as well as specific immunities (such as immunity to poison or to *sleep* effects).

Resist and SR: If the creature has resistance to certain kinds of attacks, that information is given here. Resistance to energy is shown first, as the energy type and the number of points resisted per attack (acid 10, for example). This information is followed by any other resistances the creature has. Altered saving throw bonuses for specific circumstances appear on this line. The creature's spell resistance, if any, appears after the other resistances on the same line.

Fort, Ref, Will: This entry gives the creature's saving throw modifiers.

Weakness: This entry details any weaknesses or vulnerabilities the creature has, such as light sensitivity or vulnerability to a type of energy.

Offensive Information

Refer to this section when it's the creature's turn to act in combat. All its combat options—from melee attacks to spells to potions it might drink—are detailed in this section, even if they are not strictly offensive in nature.

Speed: This entry begins with the creature's base land speed, in feet and in squares on the battle grid. Next come speeds for its other modes of movement, if applicable.

Melee/Ranged: Typically, these entries give all the physical attacks the creature can make when taking a full attack action. The first attack described is the creature's preferred form of attack, usually a melee attack of some sort but possibly (as in the example below) a ranged attack. If the creature can make only a single attack (for instance, when it is taking an attack action), use the first indicated attack bonus. Occasionally, a creature has separate options indicated for single attacks and for full attacks. For example, a halfling ranger with the Manyshot and Rapid Shot feats might have the following entries:

Ranged +1 *longbow* +8 (2d6+2/×3) with Manyshot or
+1 *longbow* +10/+10/+5 (1d6+1/×3) with Rapid Shot
or
Melee mwk longsword +8/+3 (1d6/19–20)

Each set of attack routines is prefaced by a boldface word indicating whether the attacks are melee or ranged. Next comes the weapon used for the attack, the modified attack bonus, the amount of damage the attack deals, and information about critical hits. If the weapon has the "default" critical hit characteristics (threat on a 20 and ×2 damage), this portion of the entry is omitted.

Space: This entry defines how large a square the creature takes up on the battle grid. This information is omitted for any creature that occupies a 5-foot square.

Reach: The Reach entry defines how far the creature's natural reach extends, and it also gives information about any reach weapons it might use. This information is omitted for any creature that has a reach of 5 feet.

Base Atk: The Base Atk entry gives the creature's base attack bonus without any modifiers.

Grp: This entry gives the creature's grapple bonus (base attack + size modifier + Str bonus).

Atk Options: Special abilities that the creature can employ to modify its normal attacks appear here. Such abilities might include feats such as Power Attack or Combat Expertise, or special abilities such as smite evil or trip.

Special Actions: This entry gives any special attacks that the creature can use on its turn in place of making attacks.

Combat Gear: Possessions that the creature can choose to employ on its turn as an action appear here. Such items might include scrolls, potions, wands, staffs, rods, or wondrous items.

Spells Known: This entry appears only for sorcerers and members of other classes who do not prepare spells. It begins with the creature's caster level for spells. If its rolls to overcome spell resistance are based on a number other than its caster level (because the creature has the Spell Penetration feat, for example), its total modifier is given after the expression "spell pen." Spells known are listed from highest level to 0 level, and each spell includes an attack bonus and a saving throw DC, if appropriate. If the character casts some spells at a different caster level than others, that information is also specified with the affected spells.

Spells Prepared: This entry appears only for wizards, clerics, and members of other classes who prepare spells. It begins with the character's caster level for spells. If its rolls to overcome spell resistance are based on a number other than its caster level (because the creature has the Spell Penetration feat, for example), its total modifier is given after the expression "spell pen." Spells prepared are listed from highest level to 0 level, and each spell includes an attack bonus and a saving throw DC, if appropriate. If the character casts some spells at a different caster level than others, that information is also specified with the affected spells.

A cleric's statistics block also includes the name of his deity (if applicable) and the domains to which he has access. Each domain spell he has prepared is marked with a superscript D. The granted powers of his domains might appear as combat options or resistances, or they might not appear at all, if they only modify information presented elsewhere. For example, a domain power that makes certain skills class skills would not be detailed in the statistics block.

Spell-Like Abilities: Any spell-like abilities the creature possesses appear here. The entry begins with the creature's caster level for these abilities. As with spells, this entry includes attack bonuses and saving throw DCs where appropriate.

Other Information

Most of the information presented in this section is not relevant during a combat encounter with the creature. One important exception is explanatory text for special abilities that appear elsewhere in the statistics block.

Abilities: The creature's ability scores appear here in the customary order (Str, Dex, Con, Int, Wis, Cha).

SQ: Any special qualities not presented earlier in the statistics block appear here. These entries are often class features or other abilities that are not generally relevant in combat.

Feats: This entry lists all the feats the creature possesses, including those that appear elsewhere in the statistics block.

Skills: This entry shows all the skill modifiers for skills in which the creature has ranks. Modifiers are also provided for skills to which racial modifiers, bonuses from synergy, or other modifiers apply, whether or not the creature has ranks in those skills.

Possessions: This entry is simply a list of items that the creature is wearing or carrying. The expression "combat gear" appears first, when applicable, to remind you of other possessions that are referenced above.

Spellbook: This entry gives the spells in the creature's spellbook, if it has one. The notation "spells prepared plus" indicates that the spells the creature has prepared are part of this list, but are not reiterated here.

The final portion of the statistics block consists of paragraphs explaining special abilities noted in the various entries above, in the order in which they appear.

Roleplaying Hook

When appropriate, a Hook entry appears at the end of a statistics block, set off in its own section. This is a tidbit of information to help you run the creature in a flavorful or memorable way. Generally, this information is present only if the statistics block describes a unique named character. It might be a quote or a battle cry, or an indication of the kind of characters the creature is most likely to attack. If the descriptive text that accompanies a creature's or character's statistics block includes facts about the individual's behavior or outlook that could serve as a roleplaying hook, the Hook entry is omitted.

This information does not appear in any of the statistics blocks in this book, since the NPCs presented here are archetypes rather than unique individuals.

Illus. by A. Swekel

Despite its title, this book, like its predecessor, contains material designed to interest players and their characters. That's intentional. The PCs are at the center of the story, and nothing truly happens in even the most elaborate game world unless the PCs experience it somehow—whether they see it firsthand or learn about it later.

Accordingly, this chapter details ways you can enrich the experience of the PCs in your game world, and by extension, the players at your game table. You can start PCs as apprentices or encourage them to start businesses as a sideline to adventuring (and a source for future adventures). You can offer them new powers and rewards: magical locations as treasure, teamwork benefits, and guardian spirits. Finally, you can design new prestige classes that give the players exactly what they want for their characters while immersing them in the world you've created.

STUDENTS AND MASTERS

A character can take the Leadership feat to gain a cohort, who then serves that PC as a general helper, a bodyguard, or a sidekick. The cohort is a unique NPC, but one who remains subservient to his or her master.

But what happens when a PC wishes to apprentice himself to a powerful wizard, or offers his services to a powerful rogue in order to learn from him? This relationship can be modeled on the Leadership feat, but the PC gains no tangible benefit for becoming a cohort. Not many players want to play a subservient minion of an NPC.

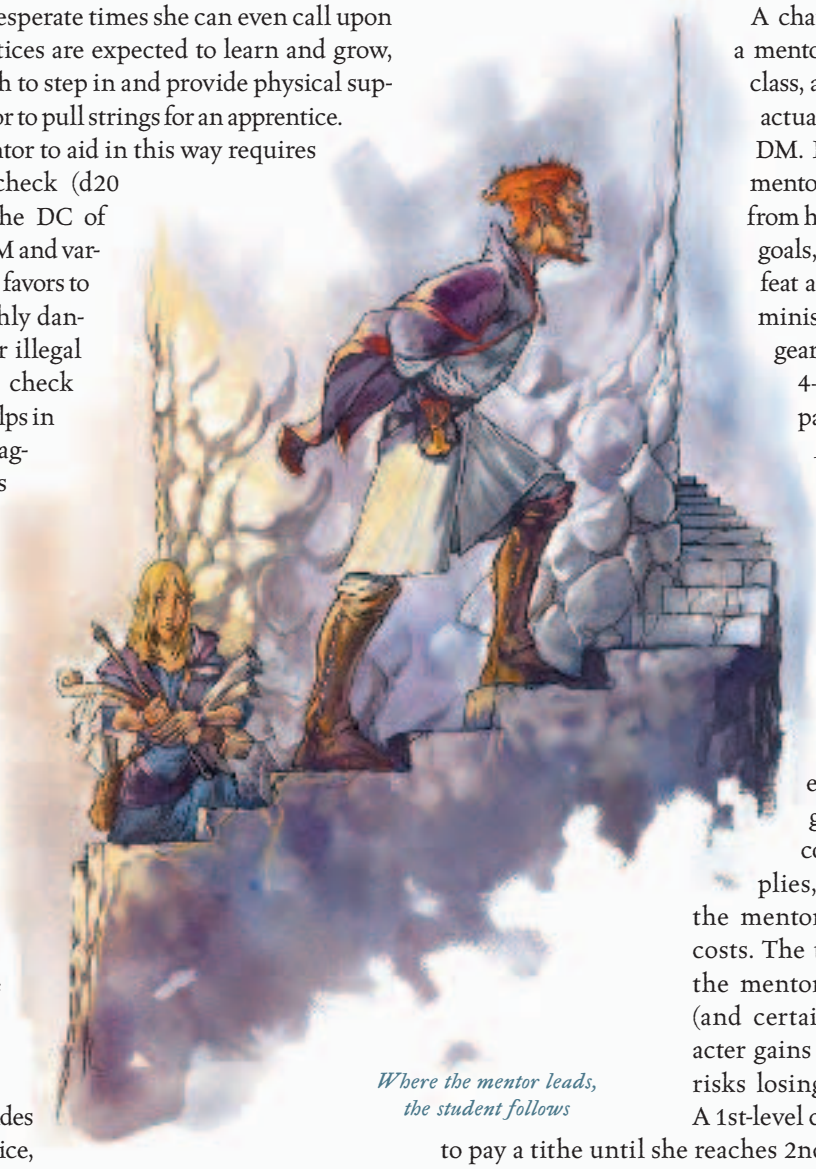
Instead, the character can opt to take the Apprentice feat. A character who wishes to become a teacher himself once he has surpassed his own instructor can take the Mentor feat.

APPRENTICESHIP

Once a character has taken the Apprentice feat, she is considered an apprentice. The first thing she must do is select a type of mentor; the mentor choices are listed below. The DM can create new mentor types using the listed mentors as guidelines.

Upon becoming an apprentice, a character immediately gains two new class skills and two bonus skill points to spend on these class skills. These new class skills are added to the class skill list for any character class or prestige class she gains. The specific skills gained as class skills depend on the type of mentor she selects.

In addition, the character gains one specific benefit (the exact type depends on the type of mentor selected) from her mentor, and in desperate times she can even call upon him for aid. Apprentices are expected to learn and grow, and mentors are loath to step in and provide physical support or financial aid, or to pull strings for an apprentice. Convincing the mentor to aid in this way requires a successful level check (d20 + character level), the DC of which is set by the DM and varies from 10 for simple favors to as high as 25 for highly dangerous, expensive, or illegal favors. A successful check means the mentor helps in some way (lends a magic item, accompanies the character on a short mission, pulls strings to get an appointment with the mayor, and so on) but demands double the normal tithe the next time the character gain a level. Once the character asks for aid, no further requests for aid will be honored until she gains at least one experience level.



Where the mentor leads, the student follows

Illus. by V. Rams

Finding a Mentor

When a character decides to become an apprentice, she must first locate an appropriate mentor. Not just any NPC will do. As with the Leadership feat, apprenticeship depends heavily on the social setting of the campaign, the actual location of the PC, and the group dynamics. You're free to disallow this feat if it would disrupt the campaign. Unlike Leadership, the allied NPC does not travel with the PCs, so he or she won't take treasure, XP, and spotlight time from the player characters.

A character can try to gain a mentor of a particular race, class, and alignment, but the actual details are left to the DM. If a character selects a mentor who is too different from her skill set, interests, or goals, the advantages of this feat are correspondingly diminished. The mentor has gear as an NPC (see Table 4–23: NPC Gear Value, page 127 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) and must have the Mentor feat.

Expectations of the Apprentice

Maintaining the status of apprentice isn't cheap. The apprentice is expected to tithe 100 gp of her earnings each time she gains a level. This tithe covers costs such as supplies, guild dues, gifts to the mentor, and miscellaneous costs. The tithe must be paid to the mentor as soon as possible (and certainly before the character gains another level), or she risks losing her apprenticeship. A 1st-level character doesn't need to pay a tithe until she reaches 2nd level.

Additionally, an apprentice is expected to practice her skills, study, and even undertake minor tasks for her mentor. Every week, she must spend at least 8 contiguous hours working for her mentor and practicing her skills. If she fails to meet this requirement, she must spend an additional day the next week. If she shirks her duties in

NEW FEAT: APPRENTICE

A character with this feat has apprenticed himself to a master in order to speed his learning and bolster his skills. This feat must be taken at 1st level. Once you start gaining experience, your methods of learning are already too ingrained for you to be able to gain the benefits of a mentor–apprentice relationship.

Prerequisite: 1st level only.

Benefits: When you select this feat, you gain all the benefits described in this section for being an apprentice.

NEW FEAT: MENTOR

A character who takes this feat has offered his knowledge and skill to a lower-level NPC and takes that NPC on as an apprentice.

Prerequisites: 8 ranks in at least two of the four skills associated with your mentor category; Apprentice; you must have graduated from an apprenticeship.

Benefits: When you select this feat, you gain all the benefits described in this section for being a mentor.

this manner for an entire month, the character's mentor expels her from the apprenticeship.

Mentor Types

The eight mentor types described below are fairly generic, and can encompass any alignment, race, or class. A mentor can easily be a chaotic evil gnome wizard craftsman or a lawful good human rogue, for example.

Each mentor type is associated with two skills; as detailed above, the apprentice gains these skills as class skills. In addition, each mentor grants the apprentice additional benefits unique to his profession and calling.

Craftsman: A craftsman mentor is skilled at building things. A craftsman grants his apprentice a +2 competence bonus on all Craft checks and a 10% discount when he purchases raw materials for items he makes (including items made with the Craft skill or with an item creation feat, but not spell components or services).

Associated Skills: Appraise, Knowledge (architecture and engineering).

Criminal: A criminal mentor is a high-ranking member of a thieves' guild, an assassin, a bandit lord, or any similar miscreant. A criminal grants his apprentice a +2 competence bonus on Intimidate checks and an extra 100 gp to spend on equipment as a starting character at 1st level. In addition, the apprentice is not required to pay the 100 gp tithe at each level, provided he remains an apprentice in good standing. He is expected to comply with requests from his mentor for minor services or tasks, such as tailing a subject, staking out a prospective work site, and so on.

Associated Skills: Bluff, Gather Information.

Entertainer: An entertainer mentor is an actor, musician, storyteller, or other notable personality, often someone quite recognizable or famous. An entertainer grants her apprentice a +2 competence bonus on Diplomacy checks and the ability to call upon the aid of an admirer or fan by spending a tithe appropriate for the apprentice's level. The admirer is of a character level equal to 1/2 the apprentice's own (minimum 1st) and must be within at least one step of his alignment, but can be of any race or class. The ally serves the apprentice for a limited duration (usually a number of days equal to his Charisma modifier, minimum of 1 day) as if a cohort. Once the apprentice calls upon the aid of an admirer, he may not do so again until he gains at least one level.

Associated Skills: Diplomacy, Perform.

Martial Artist: A martial artist mentor has perfected a particular style of fighting, often exotic. A martial artist grants his apprentice a +2 competence bonus on Intimidate checks and a +2 bonus on Reflex saving throws.

Associated Skills: Concentration, Tumble.

Philosopher: A philosopher mentor is dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge. In a civilized area he might be a scholar or librarian, while in the wilderness he might be a shaman or nomad. A philosopher grants his apprentice a +2 competence bonus on Concentration checks and a +2 bonus on Will saving throws.

Ember hones her skills under the guidance of a martial artist mentor

Illus. by R. Mimura

Associated Skills: Knowledge (any one), Sense Motive.

Soldier: A soldier mentor is a commander of an army, a captain of a garrison, a mercenary leader, or otherwise in command of a combat troop. A soldier grants his apprentice a +2 competence bonus on Intimidate checks and a +2 bonus on Fortitude saving throws.

Associated Skills: Intimidate, Knowledge (local).

Spellcaster: A spellcaster mentor could be a priest of the character's religion, a teacher at a wizard's guild, or an inventor seeking a protégé. Spellcaster mentors are not as useful as the other seven mentors for characters who cannot cast spells themselves. A spellcaster grants her apprentice a +2 competence bonus on Spellcraft checks. The tutelage of a spellcasting mentor grants additional benefits only if the apprentice shares the same class as his mentor. The apprentice only gains these benefits when he gains a level in this class; he retains all the other benefits of this feat (the bonus skills and the bonus on Spellcraft checks) regardless of what class he chooses to gain a level in.

If the apprentice and his mentor are arcane spellcasters, he gains one additional spell known at 1st level. Wizards gain this spell in their spellbooks, and spontaneous casters such as sorcerers or bards gain an additional 1st-level spell beyond their normal number of spells known. As the apprentice gains levels, he is able to learn additional spellcasting techniques from his mentor; wizards can copy from their mentor's spellbook at no charge. Spellcasters who do not prepare spells (such as a bard or sorcerer) gain increased flexibility with the spells they know. Each time an apprentice gains another of these levels, he can choose to learn a new spell in place of one he already knows. The new spell's level must be the same as that of the spell being exchanged.

If the character and his mentor are divine spellcasters who prepare spells (such as clerics, druids, paladins, or rangers), he can select one spell he knows as a preferred spell. This can be a spell of any level he can cast. Once per day, the apprentice can spontaneously cast a preferred spell by swapping out any prepared spell of an equal spell level. He can only have one preferred spell at a time, but each time he gains a level in the associated class, he can change his preferred spell to a different spell.

Associated Skills: Knowledge (any one), Use Magic Device.

Woodsman: A woodsman mentor might be a hunter, a caretaker of a forest, or a scout. A woodsman mentor grants his apprentice a +2 competence bonus on Survival checks and the ability to follow tracks as if the apprentice had the Track feat, but only when the DC is 20 or lower.

Associated Skills: Knowledge (nature), Survival.

Mentor Statistics

The DM should develop the mentor's statistics. A mentor has a base level of 5th, modified by the apprentice's Charisma bonus (if any) and by the following situations. These situations only apply when the feat is first taken; if any of these situations change at a later date (for example, the apprentice's alignment changes), the mentor's level does not change.

Table 6–1: Mentor Level Modifiers

Condition	Modifier
Mentor and apprentice are same race and class	+1
Mentor and apprentice are same alignment	+2
Mentor and apprentice share one alignment aspect	+1
Mentor and apprentice are opposing alignments	–1
Apprentice starts at maximum rank in at least two of the mentor's associated skills	+1

Becoming an Ex-Apprentice

In the case of the death or loss of a mentor, an ally or associate of the prior mentor (who is of an equal level to the original mentor) typically takes the place of the original. The benefits gained from the Apprentice feat are not altered. Two conditions can alter the apprentice benefits.

Surpassing the Mentor: Once the apprentice reaches 5th level, he graduates from his apprenticeship. He continues to gain the benefits of the Apprentice feat, but no longer needs to work with his mentor. The mentor's associated skills remain class skills for purposes of determining the maximum rank he can have in those skills, and he still retains the secondary benefits, but an associated skill can only be purchased as a class skill if he gains a level in a class that has that skill as a class skill. He no longer needs to tithe to his mentor upon gaining levels. If you allow, he can also immediately exchange his Apprentice feat for the Mentor feat (see below).

Expulsion: Grounds for expulsion include actions deemed destructive by the mentor, failing to pay tithes in a timely manner, or simply not spending the time required to study the chosen craft for an entire month. A character can also choose to leave an apprenticeship; although the apprentice can part on good terms with his mentor, the game effects are the same as if he were expelled.

An expelled apprentice immediately loses the secondary benefits of this feat, and his apprentice class skills immediately become cross-class skills unless he possesses a level in a class that grants the skill as a class skill. A skill that becomes a cross-class skill begins to atrophy; the next time the character gains a level, any skill ranks in excess of his normal maximum skill ranks for a cross-class skill are lost forever.

Gaining a New Mentor

If a character is expelled or voluntarily leaves an apprenticeship before he surpasses his mentor, he can seek out a new mentor. The new mentor can be of any type. Finding a new mentor is time-consuming. The ex-apprentice must make a successful Gather Information check (DC

10 + character level), and each attempt takes a number of days equal to his character level. Success indicates he has found a new mentor; failure indicates that he has not, but he can try again.

Once a character gains a new mentor, he must immediately pay a tithe of 100 gp times his character level. He must then spend at least a week of 8-hour days studying and working with his new mentor to become familiar with her teaching methods. After this time, the apprentice gains the mentor's associated class skills and secondary benefits, but he does not gain bonus skill points for the new class skills.

A new mentor's maximum level is one level lower than the level of the previous mentor (minimum 5th). A character who constantly changes mentors or keeps getting expelled soon finds that no one wants to take him on as an apprentice.

MENTORSHIP

Although mentors typically belong to a guild or organization, they sometimes work alone. Likewise, although most mentors take on multiple apprentices and devote their lives to teaching them, some instead focus on one apprentice at a time. Player character mentors should choose this second option, since by taking on only one apprentice they don't have to devote all their time to him. The benefits for having multiple apprentices don't stack, in any event.

An apprentice is similar to a cohort, except that the apprentice doesn't accompany the mentor on adventures as a standard rule. A new apprentice is always a 1st-level character. The apprentice's race and gender can vary, but his class must be identical to one the mentor possesses at least one level in. Likewise, the apprentice must have the Apprentice feat.

The mentor must possess at least 8 ranks in two of the four skills associated with the mentor type.

Craftsman: Appraise, Craft (any), Knowledge (architecture and engineering), Profession (any).

Criminal: Bluff, Gather Information, Open Lock, Sleight of Hand.

Entertainer: Diplomacy, Gather Information, Perform, Profession.

Martial Artist: Balance, Concentration, Jump, Tumble.

Philosopher: Concentration, Knowledge (religion), Knowledge (any one other), Sense Motive.

Soldier: Climb, Handle Animal, Intimidate, Ride.

Spellcaster: Concentration, Knowledge (arcana), Spellcraft, Use Magic Device.

Woodsman: Climb, Handle Animal, Knowledge (nature), Survival.

Since the mentor spends so much of her time teaching the apprentice and practicing these four skills, she gains a +2 competence bonus on checks involving any of her four associated skills.

While the apprentice pays his mentor a tithe, the money from that sum goes to pay for the various expenses related to maintaining the apprenticeship. The apprentice might also ask his mentor for help at times, usually in the form of a loan of money or the casting of a spell. The mentor is free to react to these requests as she sees fit, but if she ignores them too often, she might lose her apprentice.

Finding an Apprentice

When a PC takes the Mentor feat, the DM should prepare a small group of three to six prospective apprentices for the character to choose from. At this stage, the prospective apprentices don't need full statistics; a name, race, class, gender, and one-sentence personality should be enough. When the PC selects one of them, she generates the apprentice's ability scores, using the elite array (15, 14, 13, 12, 10, 8). The apprentice must have the Apprentice feat, but otherwise the details are up to the player character.

A new apprentice starts at 1st level, with gear appropriate to his class.

Keeping an Apprentice

The mentor is free to treat her apprentice however she wants, entrusting him with as little or as much responsibility as she feels appropriate. The mentor score measures her apprentice's loyalty. When she first gains this feat, her initial mentor score equals 1 + her Charisma modifier and is modified by the following conditions.

Situation	Modifier
Apprentice's character level	+1 per level
The mentor grants the apprentice a favor	+1
The mentor refuses the apprentice a favor	–2
The mentor provides room and board	+1
Each week the mentor fails to train the apprentice for the minimum required time	–1
Each time the mentor asks the apprentice for a favor	–1
The apprentice is killed as a direct result of the mentor's actions	–5

Training an Apprentice

Apprentices advance with training. Each week, a mentor is expected to dedicate at least 8 consecutive hours to training with her apprentice. Meeting this minimum amount of training allows the apprentice to advance and keeps the mentor's own skills honed. If she neglects her apprentice, not only does she take a penalty to her mentor score, but she also loses her skill check bonuses until she spends time with her apprentice.

With adequate training, the apprentice gains a level each time the mentor gains a level. He also acquires equipment appropriate to an NPC of his class (see Chapter 4 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

When the apprentice reaches 5th level, he graduates and follows the mentor as a cohort, as if she had the Leadership feat.

Favors from an Apprentice

Periodically, a mentor might need a favor from her apprentice. To determine if the favor is granted, make a mentor check by rolling 1d20 and adding the mentor score. A small favor, such as assisting in the creation of a magic item or guarding a location for a day, is a DC 15 check. A large favor, such as asking the apprentice to accompany the mentor on a short, relatively safe adventure or guarding a location for several weeks is a DC 25 check. A huge favor, such as asking for the apprentice to accompany the mentor on an extended adventure or asking him to make the mentor a magic item, is a DC 40 check. Each time the mentor asks a favor of her apprentice, her mentor score goes down by 1, regardless of whether or not the favor is granted.

Losing an Apprentice

If a mentor's score ever drops to 0 or lower, the mentor's apprentice grows dissatisfied and leaves. The mentor immediately loses the bonuses to her associated skills.

The mentor can also choose to expel her apprentice at any time; the results are identical to when an apprentice voluntarily leaves. If her apprentice dies, she can choose to have the apprentice raised from the dead, at which point he might leave, depending on the circumstances of his death.

The mentor can seek out a new apprentice once a month has passed. If she gains a new apprentice, her mentor score is reset to its base value, –1 per previous apprentice lost. If a mentor loses too many apprentices, she'll quickly find that no one wants to become her student due to the reputation she's gained.

At the DM's option, relocating to a new, distant location can remove the penalties for losing apprentices.

Finally, once the apprentice reaches 5th level and graduates from his apprenticeship, he becomes a cohort, as if the mentor had the Leadership feat. The mentor can dismiss him, if she wishes, with no ill effect or hard feelings. This does not count as a lost apprentice should she seek to gain a new one in the future. She must find a new apprentice within 30 days to continue to benefit from the skill bonuses.

RUNNING A BUSINESS

Dungeons & Dragons player characters typically have one source of income: they fight monsters and take their treasure. Rewards from grateful kings and barons and guildmasters might supplement this income, but for the most part, PCs finance themselves with treasure.

Yet this isn't the only way characters can make money. Certainly, it's not the way the NPCs of the world survive. They rely on skills such as Craft, Perform, and Profession for their livelihood. Low-level PCs might rely upon these skills as well to augment their meager income at the start of an adventuring career.

No matter what sort of business a character runs, the rules for determining its success or failure work the same.

BUSINESS BASICS

The rules presented here for running businesses function primarily off a single skill check, based on the business's primary skill. The owner makes a special skill check using this skill, called a profit check. The owner can opt to take 10 on a profit check but he can't take 20. One profit check is made once every business term, typically one month. The profitability of the business is set by its risk and modified by its location, the business owner's secondary skills, and several other factors. The degree by which the profit check succeeds determines how much income the business generates, or how much it loses, for that term.

While the profit check is usually based upon a Profession or Craft skill, it represents more than what a single character does to earn money. A business is an investment by the owner, and running a business produces more

Table 6–2: Businesses

Business	Primary Skill	Secondary Skills	Associated Guild	Capital	Resources	Risk
Criminal organization	Intimidate	Knowledge (local), primary skill of business front	Criminal	High	High	High
Farm	Profession (farmer)	Handle Animal, Knowledge (nature)	Naturalist	Low	Low	Low
Fighting school	Base attack	Intimidate, Craft	Mercenary	Low	High	Medium
Moneylender	Profession (bookkeeper)	Diplomacy, Appraise	Government	Medium	Medium	Medium
Performance hall	Perform	Diplomacy, Sense Motive	Service	Low	Medium	Low
Service	Profession or Craft	Appraise, Diplomacy	Religious or service	Medium	Low	Low
Shop	Profession (shopkeeper)	Appraise, Sense Motive	Arcane, religious, or mercantile	Medium	Low	High
Tavern	Profession (innkeeper)	Profession (brewer or cook), Sense Motive	Mercantile or service	Medium	Medium	High
Troupe	Perform	Special	Service	Medium	Low	Low
University	Knowledge	Diplomacy, Profession (teacher)	Arcane, religious, or scholastic	High	Medium	Low

profit than a character could earn on his own. In fact, a character who is a business owner could make a profit check during a month while he simultaneously works for the business, earning gold each week with a Profession or Craft check (such gold is considered part of the business's overhead).

To build a new business, a character first selects the desired business category. Second, the owner pays the initial investment depending on where he locates the business (see Table 6–3). Third, he pays for the initial resources for the business (this includes buildings and employees). Once he accomplishes these three steps, he's ready to start raking in the cash (or to go bankrupt, if things turn out poorly).

BUSINESS CATEGORIES

The first step to establishing a business is, naturally enough, determining what kind of business the prospective business owner wishes to run. Effectively, the success of a business depends on one primary skill and two secondary skills. There is no minimum required skill rank in a primary or secondary skill to start a business, but a business founded by a character with poor skills won't last that long at all.

This section presents several archetypical businesses that PCs might want to try their hands at. You can create new businesses using the following as models.

Primary Skill: This entry gives the business's primary skill—the skill that directly affects the business's success, and the one that every proprietor of the business must have.

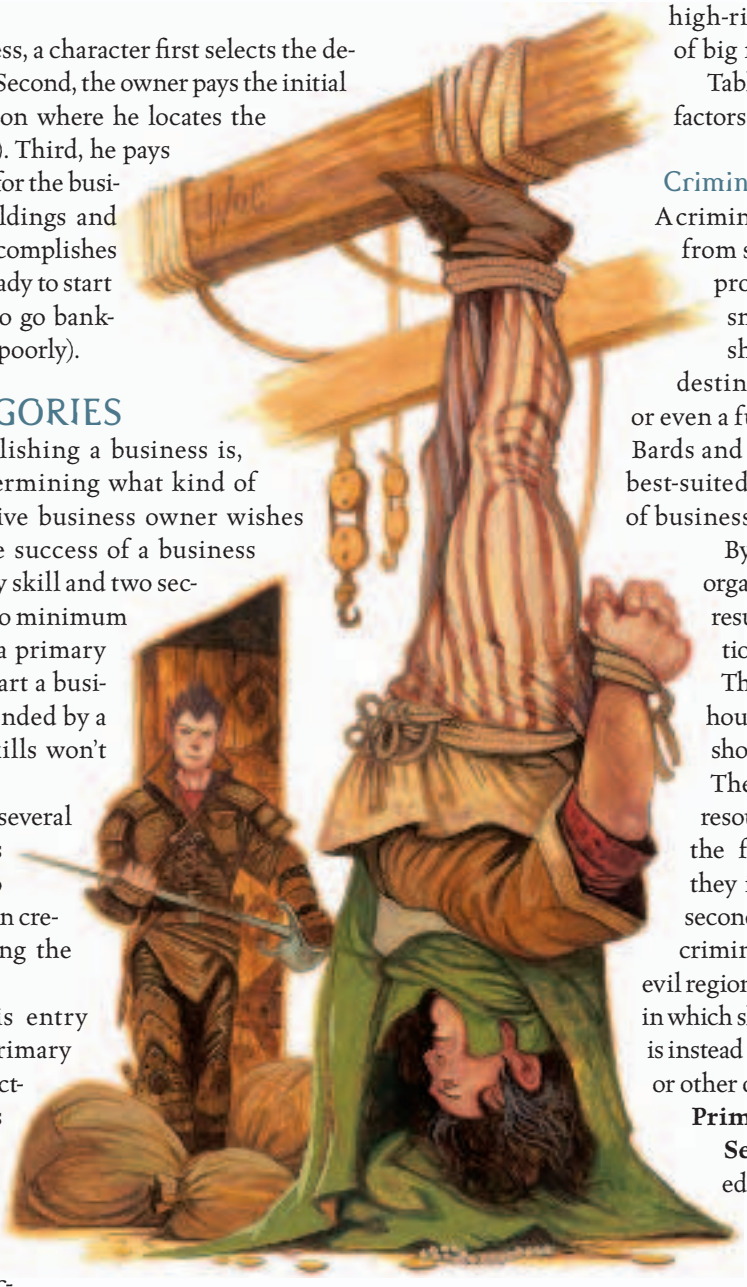
Secondary Skills: This entry gives the second and third most important skills for the business; see Table 6–5 for details of how these skills affect a business's success.

Capital: The relative amount of cash the entrepreneur needs to start the business; see Table 6–3.

Resources: The relative amount of resources (primarily buildings and employees) the owner needs to maintain the business (see Table 6–4). This also determines the final cost of operation, reflected as a modifier to the profit check.

Risk: This indicates how solid the business tends to be (see Table 6–6). A low-risk business is reliable and less prone to going under. A high-risk business is susceptible to changes in the marketplace, but while more high-risk businesses go bankrupt than low-risk ones, high-risk offers the possibility of big money.

Table 6–2 categorizes these factors for easy reference.



A criminal organization might employ drastic methods to extract information

Criminal Organization

A criminal organization can range from something as simple as a protection racket among a small group of established shops to a complex clandestine smuggling operation or even a full-blown thieves' guild. Bards and rogues are probably the best-suited characters for this type of business.

By their natures, criminal organizations are illegal. As a result, all criminal organizations need a cover or front. This could be a slaughterhouse, a guildhall, a book shop, or any other business. The additional costs and resources needed to maintain the front are negligible, but they impact the organization's secondary skill requirement. A criminal organization run in an evil region (a slave trader in a nation in which slavery is legal, for example) is instead treated as a service, a shop, or other ordinary business.

Primary Skill: Intimidate.

Secondary Skills: Knowledge (local), primary skill of business front.

Capital: High.

Resources: High.

Risk: High.

Farm

Farms are specialized businesses similar to shops and services, yet they require their own special set of skills and resources. When a PC decides to build a farm, he should determine the nature of the primary crops and livestock. Unless he chooses something exotic, this decision is largely cosmetic in game terms. Farms are good choices for druids and rangers; even barbarians

Illus. by W. O'Connor

can make excellent farmers if they can keep their rage under control.

Primary Skill: Profession (farmer).
Secondary Skills: Handle Animal, Knowledge (nature).
Capital: Low.
Resources: Low.
Risk: Low.

Fighting School

The fighting school represents any establishment built to train aspirants in a specific method of combat, whether that method is unarmed combat, cavalry, archery, or melee weaponry. Gladiatorial arenas are a particularly popular form of fighting school. Fighting schools (and universities) are unique in that their primary customers reside on site, imparting the difficulties of running a service or tavern on top of everything else. Fighters, monks, paladins, and rangers make good owners of fighting schools.

Primary Skill: Unlike other businesses, the fighting school's "primary skill" is not a skill at all. Rather, the owner uses her base attack bonus as the primary skill when running a fighting school. If the school focuses on a specific weapon, the owner can include any bonuses from Weapon Focus or Greater Weapon Focus to the profit check, but no other bonuses apply.

Secondary Skills: Intimidate, Craft (armorsmithing, bowmaking, or weaponsmithing).
Capital: Low.
Resources: High.
Risk: Medium.

Moneylender

Moneylenders make their living by investing and lending money. Moneylenders require more cash to start out but fairly low resources, since they don't need much more than a vault and a modest building around it. Bards and rogues make the best moneylenders, although clerics might find talent for the trade as well.

Primary Skill: Profession (bookkeeper).
Secondary Skills: Diplomacy, Appraise.
Capital: Medium.
Resources: Medium.
Risk: Medium.

Performance Hall

A performance hall is an entertainment venue where people can enjoy the opera, listen to music, watch a play, and so on. Performance halls are located in structures such as theaters and concert halls, and have close relationships to troupe businesses. Bards and monks are the best suited for performance halls.

Primary Skill: Perform (any).
Secondary Skills: Diplomacy, Sense Motive.
Capital: Low.
Resources: Medium.
Risk: Low.

Service

Services cover a wide range of businesses, especially those that revolve around the Craft or Profession skills. An armorsmith, a bookbinder, a shipwright, a guide, a gardener, and an innkeeper all provide services. If a business doesn't obviously fit into one of the other categories, it's probably a service. Services are generally easy to get off the ground, since most start small and work their way up. Services are so varied that there isn't one particular class that does better at them than another.

Primary Skill: Profession (any) or Craft (any).
Secondary Skills: Appraise, Diplomacy.
Capital: Medium.
Resources: Low.
Risk: Low.

Shop

Shops are similar to services, except that they focus on selling the products of service businesses rather than creating the product. A shop can be as humble as a general store or as impressive as a magic item shop. This business also covers the traveling merchant. Bards and rogues make the best shop owners.

Primary Skill: Profession (shopkeeper).
Secondary Skills: Appraise, Sense Motive.
Capital: Medium.
Resources: Low.
Risk: High.

Tavern

The tavern combines the features of a shop and a performance hall. Customers come to a tavern both to purchase food and to be entertained, even if the entertainment consists of nothing but gossip. Any type of character can do well as a tavern keeper, since the more unique and colorful the owner's appearance and personality, the more likely he is to attract curious new customers.

Primary Skill: Profession (innkeeper).
Secondary Skills: Profession (brewer or cook), Sense Motive.
Capital: Medium.
Resources: Medium.
Risk: High.

Troupe

A troupe is similar to a performance hall in that the owner of a troupe is an entertainer. But whereas the owner of a performance hall is tied to one location, a troupe travels from place to place. As a result, troupes can make much more money if they're lucky, but their nomadic existence

also prevents repeat business. As with performance halls, bards and monks make the best business owners.

Primary Skill: Perform (any).

Secondary Skills: Perform (any other than the primary perform skill), one of the following: Balance, Climb, Disguise, Escape Artist, Handle Animal, Jump, Ride, Sleight of Hand, Tumble. Once this second secondary skill is chosen, it cannot be altered without disbanding and rebuilding the troupe.

Capital: Medium.

Resources: Low.

Risk: Low.

University

A university is similar to a fighting school in that its primary customers live on site and are fairly stationary. Unlike fighting schools, universities need greater capital to get off the ground and not as many resources; the equipment and ratio of teachers to students is much more favorable. This category of business covers everything from small private magic schools to sprawling campuses in big cities to cramped boarding schools. Although a wide variety of topics can be taught at a university, the owner need not be knowledgeable on all topics taught there. Bards, clerics, sorcerers, and wizards make the best choices for this business.

Primary Skill: Knowledge (any).

Secondary Skill: Diplomacy, Profession (teacher).

Capital: High.

Resources: Medium.

Risk: Low.

BUILDING THE BUSINESS

Once the owner has selected what kind of business to run, he needs to determine where to base the business. Without exception, businesses function better near larger cities; even farms work better near large cities. Unfortunately, the larger the city, the more expensive the costs to build and maintain a business. Businesses in large settlements spend the first several years paying off loans they had to take to start out.

Location: This indicates where the business is located. Wilderness assumes that the business isn't located within 20 miles of any settlement. Rural assumes the business is located near a thorp, hamlet, or village. Town assumes the business is located near or in a small or large town. City assumes the business is located in a small or large city. Metropolis assumes the business is located in a metropolis (or larger) urban area.

Profit Modifier: This bonus or penalty applies to profit checks made with a business in the indicated location.

Capital: This indicates the amount of free cash required to start a low, medium, or high initial investment business in the indicated region. This money, once spent to start a business, is gone and cannot be recovered. The money covers all the intangible costs of starting a business, including bribes to the appropriate officials, purchasing of equipment and supplies needed to run the business, advertising, tithes, and taxes. The cost of buildings and employees is not covered by the initial investment; these are based on the Resource requirement of the business and quantified in Table 6–4 instead.

Table 6–3: Profit Modifiers and Initial Investments

	Profit	Capital		
Location	Modifier	Low	Medium	High
Wilderness	–10	500 gp	2,000 gp	4,000 gp
Rural	–4	2,000 gp	4,000 gp	8,000 gp
Town	+0	4,000 gp	8,000 gp	16,000 gp
City	+2	8,000 gp	16,000 gp	32,000 gp
Metropolis	+4	16,000 gp	32,000 gp	64,000 gp

The business's location has little to no effect on how many buildings and employees are needed to keep it afloat, but these two factors do represent additional resources that must be purchased over and above the cost of the initial investment.

The costs for buildings below come from Table 3–27 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Table 6–4: Minimum Resource Needs for Businesses

Resource Need	Building Type and Cost	Employees
Low	1 simple house (1,000 gp) or 2 horses and a carriage (500 gp total)[1]	0
Medium	1 grand house (5,000 gp)	5
High	1 mansion (100,000 gp)[2]	20

1 Businesses operating out of a horse-drawn carriage take a –2 penalty on profit checks.

2 Alternatively, a high-resource business can be based in any combination of grand houses or towers that equals 100,000 gp.

BENEFITS OF BUSINESS OPERATION

Dungeons & Dragons is about adventure and excitement; the day-to-day running of a business can be anything but. For faster gameplay, the operations of a business are therefore generalized and significantly simplified. Businesses generate income or loss once each month based on a profit check.

The Profit Check

Each month, the owner makes a profit check. To make a profit check, the owner makes a skill check using his business's primary skill. A profit check equals 1d20 + primary skill + modifiers. Thus, a tavern owner would make a Profession (innkeeper) check, while a moneylender would make a Profession (bookkeeper) check. He can take 10 on a profit check if he has at least 1 rank in the primary skill. He can never take 20 on a profit check. This check is modified by the factors listed on Table 6–5 (see the next page).

Table 6–5: Profit Check Modifiers

Situation	Modifier
Owner has at least 5 ranks in both secondary skills	+1
Owner has at least 10 ranks in both secondary skills	+2
Owner has 15 or more ranks in both secondary skills	+3
Owner is a member of an associated guild	+1
Owner spends less than 8 hours per week assisting business growth	–8
Owner spends more than 40 hours per week assisting business growth	+2
Owner has the Business Savvy feat (see below)	+2
Business is located in the wilderness	–10
Business is located in a rural area	–4
Business is located in a city	+2
Business is located in a metropolis	+4
Business is a low-resource business	+1
Business is a high-resource business	–4
Business is a low-risk business	+1
Business is a high-risk business	–4
Previous profit check failed	–1 per consecutive check failed
A business partner successfully aids during the term[1]	+2
A specialist is on staff	Variable[2]

1 A business partner can be a hired specialist, a cohort, or even another PC. In order to provide a bonus on the profit check, the partner must make an aid another check, using the business's primary skill.
2 A specialist adds a bonus of +2 if his specialized skill is the business's primary skill. He adds a +1 bonus if his specialized skill is one of the business's secondary skills.

Once the check is made, subtract 25 to derive the profit rating. A negative profit rating at this point indicates a loss for that term, whereas a positive profit rating indicates a profit. The actual profit or loss in gold pieces depends on the risk level of the business. A low-risk business is more likely to make a profit, but the profit will be measurably smaller than what a high-risk business could attain. On the other hand, a high-risk business that doesn't make a profit might instead have a significant loss.

A business owner catches up on his bookkeeping

Illus. by V. Rams

Table 6–6: Profit or Loss By Risk

Risk Level	Profit
Low	Profit rating × 5 gp
Medium	Profit rating × 20 gp
High	Profit rating × 50 gp

For example, Garrick is a 7th-level character running the local town tavern. He spends more than 40 hours working each week, has 10 ranks in both Profession (cook) and Sense Motive, is a member of the local business guild, and has a business partner (his wife) who helps him each week. The tavern is a medium-resource, high-risk endeavor, so his total modifier on his profit check is +3. With his 10 ranks in Profession (innkeeper) and his +2 Wisdom bonus, he gets a 25 on his profit check if he takes 10, which is a 0 profit rating, so his business neither gains nor loses money for the term.

If he had achieved a 30 result on the profit check (a good month, indeed), his profit rating would be 5 (30 minus 25), and his profit would be 250 gp (5 × 50 gp).

If the profit rating results in a loss, the owner must cover those losses, either from his own pocket, contacting a moneylender, or making arrangements with his debtors, the details of which are left to the DM. If the losses cannot be covered then the business fails (see Failed Businesses, below).

MAINTAINING A BUSINESS

Once the business is located, any necessary buildings are purchased or bought, and at least the minimum number of employees is hired, the business is ready to go. The benefits of operating a business are detailed in the previous section; this section covers the rules for maintaining a business.

Cost of Operation

All businesses have a cost of operation. This cost includes employee salaries, repairs to buildings, regularly purchased supplies, taxes, fines, and anything else that might crop up during the day-to-day process.

NEW FEAT: BUSINESS SAVVY

You are particularly gifted when it comes to setting up and maintaining profitable businesses.

Prerequisite: Negotiator.

Benefits: You gain a +2 bonus on all profit checks. In addition, you get a +1 luck bonus on all attack rolls, saving throws, and checks when resolving any business-related events.

The owner of a business pays the cost of operation during each term, but that cost is incorporated into the profit check.

The base cost of operating a business is determined by its resource needs, but occasionally there might be additional expenses for a business beyond the base cost, including the salaries of additional employees or specialists, costs arising from business-related events, and any upgrades purchased in the current term.

Specialist Employees

As a business grows and becomes more profitable, the owner can hire specialists to further enhance the business's profit. Having a specialist on staff grants a bonus on profit checks. A specialist must have at least 8 ranks in the relevant Profession or Craft skill. If the specialist's skill is one of the business's secondary skills, it gains a flat +1 bonus on its profit check. If the specialist's skill and the business's primary skill are the same, the business gains a +2 bonus on profit checks.

Specialists put an additional drain on other employees, unfortunately, since they demand more from them. A business can support one specialist at a rate of 10 gp per month. Each additional specialist requires more employees, so the cost of each additional specialist with the associated employees is 20 gp more than the previous specialist. Thus a business that employs three primary-skill specialists would pay a total of 90 gp per month on specialist wages (10 gp for one, 30 gp for the second, and 50 gp for the third) and gain a total bonus of +6 on the profit check from those specialists.

Hiring new employees and specialists is a common tactic for successful businesses. Salaries for these additional employees (standard and specialists alike) represent additional costs over and above the business's normal cost of operation.

Upgrading a Business

An owner can take steps such as buying the latest equipment, refurbishing buildings, or ordering a new brand of ale to improve his business, and these upgrades usually have a positive effect on the profitability of the enterprise. Upgrades are essentially additional capital investments in the business. If the business owner invests 25% of the initial capital cost of the business, he rolls 1d4 and adds the result as a permanent bonus on future profit checks. A business owner can only benefit from one upgrade every three months.

Business Partners

Additional business partners can also enhance an operation's profitability. Business partners must be from one of four categories: they can be hired specialists, they can be cohorts, they can be allied NPCs, or they can be other player characters. Only hired specialists put an additional drain on the maintenance costs, but all four types are within their rights to receive a share of the profits. The details for this profit sharing are up to the owner and partners to work out, but usually, the owner gets a full share and any partners get a half share. In cases where the partner had an equal hand in setting up the business, he can demand up to a full share as well.

When it comes time to make a profit check, one of the business partners makes the check, using the appropriate skill check modifier. The rest of the business partners can use the aid another action to grant +2 bonuses on the profit check, as long as they spent at least 8 hours a week during the current term helping on site at the business. Business partners are not required to help in this manner.

Hiring a specialist to be a business partner is an excellent idea for a PC who wants to start a business as an additional source of income but doesn't want to be tied down to the business. By having the specialist make the profit checks, the PC is free to do as he pleases with his time. If he's available to help out, he can try to aid another on the profit check; if not, the specialist can still handle the business on her own.

Selling a Business

A business owner might decide to sell a profitable business to a prospective individual or group. An owner who sells his business gains half his initial investment, adjusted by the recent profit or loss.

Failed Businesses

A business that goes bankrupt loses all its employees immediately and can no longer be used to make profit checks. The owner might find himself in dire straits if he still owes moneylenders or other creditors money; depending on their patience and temperament they might or might not attempt to collect on what's owed them by seizing property or threatening the owner. In such a situation, the business is sold for one-quarter of the original initial investment, any loss is covered from those proceeds, and the owner retains the remainder (if any). If no money is left after the losses are covered, the owner could find himself indebted to moneylenders.

If the owner doesn't owe anyone money, he can attempt to launch a new business (or even relaunch his prior failed business). He must pay the initial investment as normal, but if he already owns buildings, he obviously doesn't have to repurchase them.

BUSINESS EVENTS

Businesses don't operate in a vacuum. They require customers, investors, and even competition to thrive.

Since the business must be exposed enough for these factors to influence it, it is also vulnerable to other influences. Some of these business-related events can increase profitability for a term, but most present challenges that must be overcome if the business is to survive.

Consult Table 6–7 to see what sort of business-related events occur. Roll once per term for low- and medium-risk businesses, and twice per term for high-risk businesses. The timing of the events is left to you, but you should strive to have them occur at times when the owner is able to react to the event. If an owner is away for extended periods of time, there's little he can do and he simply has to accept what chance has to offer.

As the business continues to grow and more events occur, try to weave them together so that they build logically from one another. For example, if you keep rolling up robberies, perhaps a mastermind who has a grievance against the business owner is orchestrating the thefts.

To roll up a business-related encounter, roll d20, modified by circumstances as shown in Table 6–8 (apply one modifier from each section of the table, as applicable). A result of higher than 20 is possible. Descriptions and definitions of the entries on Table 6–7 follow.

Table 6–7: Business-Related Encounters

d20	Encounter
1 or less	Monster
2	Banditry
3	Wounded adventurer
4	Bad weather
5	Natural disaster
6	Fire
7	Burglary
8	Accident
9	Irate customer
10	No encounter
11	Bad competition
12	Infestation
13	Employee unrest
14	Spell gone awry
15	Sabotage
16	Unexpected taxes
17	Protection racket
18	Mistaken identity
19	Important customer
20	Spectacle
21	Good competition
22	Booming business
23	Unusual patron
24	Franchise offer
25 or more	Admirer

Accident: Nearby construction or a traffic accident impacts the business in some way; perhaps a partially completed building collapses onto the owner's shop, or maybe an out-of-control carriage crashes onto the front porch. The damage to the business caused by the accident costs 2d6×100 gp to repair.

Table 6–8: Business-Related Encounter Modifiers

Circumstance	Modifier
Business Location	
Wilderness	–2
Rural	+0
Town	+1
City	+2
Metropolis	+3
Business Owner's Status	
Owner is unusually anonymous[1]	–2
Owner is unusually famous[2]	+2
Business Profitability	
Business is failing	–1
Business is stable	+0
Business is booming	+1

1 Use this modifier if the owner is not as famous in the area as other characters of his level would be. Perhaps he's new to the area, or he simply keeps his activities quiet. Never apply this modifier to high-resource businesses.
2 Use this modifier if the owner is widely known. Perhaps his business has spawned dozens of imitators, or maybe his deals are known far and wide to be the best (or worst) in the nation.

Admirer: A friendly character (usually an NPC with class levels) with a CR equal to 2 less than the owner's level approaches the owner with a request. She might wish to hire the owner, tell him a rumor he heard, or could simply be looking for friendship or advice.

Bad Competition: A second business front with nearly identical services opens nearby and begins to attract away customers and undercut prices. Unlike the good competition encounter, the owner of the competing business in this case nurtures a grudge against the owner and deliberately tries to bring grief to his establishment. If the two businesses are taverns, the competitor might hire a druid to cause a rat infestation in the owner's bar. If the two businesses are fighting schools, the competitor might challenge the owner to a fight and then cheat in the duel. Until the bad competition leaves, the business owner takes a –1d6 penalty on profit checks. Bad competition remains until the owner makes a profit in three successive months.

Bad Weather: A particularly bad few days (or weeks) of weather cause minor damage to the business, necessitating repairs for 3d6×10 gp.

Banditry: A group of bandits targets the owner's establishment. The bandits might attempt to set up a protection racket, but they are more likely to simply try to assault the business and rob it blind. The bandits consist of a number of thugs with a combined EL equal to the owner's character level –2 (minimum EL 1).

Booming Business: For whatever reason, business is booming this term. Apply a +4 bonus on the roll for the term's profit check.

Burglary: A thief tries to break into the business and rob it. The thief is working alone, and he should have two fewer class levels than the owner. The level of his success

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A peddler's cart crashing through the front window makes for a bad day at the bookstore

obviously depends on what sort of defenses and guardians the owner has established; if he has none, the thief steals any gold kept on site, along with 2d6×100 gp in goods and supplies.

Employee Unrest: The business's employees are unhappy. They shirk their duties, the quality of their work suffers, and the atmosphere at work is poor. The unrest can be mollified with a DC 30 Diplomacy check or a pay raise. Each pay raise adds additional overhead of 5 gp per employee per term. Failure to address the concerns of the unhappy employees results in a cumulative –1 penalty on profit checks each term; this penalty is removed completely once the employees are happy again.

Fire: Fire is a danger that can threaten an entire city. This could be a fire on par with a forest fire (*Dungeon Master's Guide* page 87) that the owner must help fight in order to save his business, or it could be a new fire that starts on site. Arson is a possibility in this case; if no one's around to stop the fire, the business burns to the ground. The business can no longer make profit checks and must be rebuilt.

Franchise Offer: The business owner is approached by another entrepreneur and given a franchise offer. For an investment of no less than 1,000 gp, the entrepreneur can establish a linked business elsewhere in the nation (or perhaps in the same city, if the city is large enough). Establishing a franchise grants a bonus on the business's next profit check equal to +5 per 1,000 gp donated. Each profit check thereafter, the bonus decreases by 1 per term until it reaches +1, at which point it becomes a permanent +1 bonus on profit checks.

Good Competition: A similar business opens nearby. Unlike the bad competition encounter, though, the owner of this competing business merely likes what the business owner is doing and is trying his own hand at it. Good competition lasts for 2d4 months, during which time the business owner subtracts 1d6 from his profit check. From then on, he adds 1d8 to his profit check.

Important Customer: Someone important visits the business. This could be one of the owner's guildmasters, a local politician, or a famous bard or hero. The visitor's patronage itself doesn't impact profits, but the owner might be able to make an ally or contact out of the visitor. More important, word of the visit spreads and a number of customers visit the business as a result, granting a +2 bonus on profit checks for the next 1d4 months.

Infestation: The business has become infested with rats, vermin, or another undesirable pest. Each term the infestation is allowed to continue, apply a cumulative –1 penalty on all profit checks. The infestation can be removed with a successful DC 25 Survival check and 2d6×10 gp of supplies; at the DM's option, certain spells

(such as *repel vermin* cast multiple times) can cure the infestation as well. Penalties accrued by infestation diminish at the same rate, lowering by 1 point per term as customers slowly become convinced the infestation is over.

Irate Customer: A customer who has a bone to pick with the owner visits the business. The customer's grievance might or might not be legitimate, but it nonetheless requires immediate attention. The customer's initial attitude is unfriendly; if the owner doesn't adjust this to at least friendly with a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check (or with appropriate magic), the customer leaves the business and spreads the word of his poor treatment throughout the region. The next 2d4 profit checks take a –4 penalty as a result.

Mistaken Identity: The business owner or one of his employees is mistaken for someone else—famous or infamous. This has no effect on the business's profit, but might cause further developments as the DM sees fit.

Monster: A monster native to the region attacks the business. The attack could be against the employees, the building, or both. The monster's CR should be equal to the business owner's character level. If it is not defeated, the damage it causes results in a –6 penalty on profit checks until repairs costing 4d10×100 gp are made.

Natural Disaster: A natural disaster strikes; this could be a tornado, an earthquake, a blizzard, or anything else appropriate to the region. The disaster is devastating not only to the business, but to everyone else in the region. As a result, profit checks take a –8 penalty for this month. Each month that follows, this penalty decreases by 2 until four terms have passed and the penalty is removed altogether.

No Encounter: Nothing unusual happens this term.

Protection Racket: The business owner is approached by an intimidating group of thugs and made to understand that if the owner pays a fee of 3d6×10 gp per term, the business won't have an accident. Paying this money only prevents trouble from this particular group; others can still rob or menace the business. Failure to pay these demands or deal with the group behind the racket ensures that something bad happens each term. Roll an additional business-related encounter each term the fee isn't paid, rerolling anything with a beneficial result.

Sabotage: This could be as simple as petty vandalism or as dangerous as a legitimate attempt to destroy the business. The business owner should make a special profit check to determine how bad the damage is, opposed by the saboteur's Disable Device check (which should be equal to the business owner's base profit check). Success indicates the attempt was thwarted in time, but failure indicates damage. The profit check for this term takes a –4 penalty.

Spectacle: An unusual form of public entertainment performs near the business for several days—a talented bard, a street circus, a flashy magic display, or a parade, for

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Gronka tells Krusk to mind his own business

example. The spectacle brings out the crowd; the business gains a +2 bonus on this term's profit check.

Spell Gone Awry: A spellcaster has foolishly experimented with a spell or had a mishap with a scroll. The business might have to contend with a rampaging summoned creature, the aftermath of a *fireball*, or a squad of the city guard under a *confusion* effect.

Unexpected Taxes: The local government, either having fallen on hard times or having succumbed to greed, raises taxes for a short period of time. For the next 1d6 terms, the owner takes a –1d4 penalty on profit checks.

Unusual Patron: The store has attracted the attention of a particularly unusual customer; a dragon, an outsider, or something equally exotic decides to visit the store once or twice per term. The novelty (or notoriety) of this development grants the business a permanent +1 bonus on profit checks, as long as the unusual patron continues to support the business.

Wounded Adventurer: A wounded adventurer staggers into the business seeking aid and shelter. The adventurer might or might not be what he seems; he could herald the arrival of bandits or a monster, or he might himself be a bandit trying to con the owner out of some cash.

TEAMWORK BENEFITS

In D&D, PCs rarely stand alone. The wizard relies on the doughty fighter to intercept charging enemies, and the fighter in turn depends on the cleric's healing magic when the battle is over.

But over time, characters who adventure shoulder to shoulder together can realize teamwork benefits based on their long history together. Likewise, PCs who adventure together can bind a guardian spirit to their group, further strengthening their ability to function as a team.

WHAT IS A TEAMWORK BENEFIT?

Experienced D&D players understand the value of specific tactics that take advantage of teamwork. However, teamwork also has a more general benefit. Once characters have trained with specific comrades, they're attuned to the nuances of how they fight, move, and communicate. Characters who have spent time working as a team can derive a benefit simply from having their comrades nearby. This teamwork benefit grants an expanded use of a skill, a bonus on certain checks, or a battlefield action otherwise unavailable to the team members.

To qualify for a teamwork benefit, PCs must meet two broad categories of requirements: training time and prerequisites.

First, the characters seeking the benefit must jointly practice techniques relevant to the benefit for at least two weeks before acquiring the benefit. This two-week training period must be repeated whenever a new character joins the group, as the newcomer becomes accustomed to the operating procedures of veteran team members.

Second, some teamwork benefits have prerequisites such as skill ranks, base attack bonus, or feats. A prerequisite can take one of two different forms.

Task Leader Prerequisites: These requirements must be met by at least one character on the team. If only one character qualifies, and that character leaves the team, the group loses the teamwork benefit until the character returns or is replaced by another character who meets the same prerequisites. The designation of task leader can vary from one benefit to another; a character who serves as the task leader for the Infiltration teamwork benefit might be a different individual from the one who functions as the task leader for the Ranged Precision benefit. In addition to the indicated prerequisites, a task leader must have an Intelligence score of at least 8. (While a task leader need not be a genius, nor has he particular need of a strong personality, he must be at least reasonably capable of communicating his thoughts to others.)

Team Member Prerequisites: Every character on the team must meet these requirements. Any character who joins the team must meet the prerequisites in order for the team to enjoy the teamwork benefit.

For example, the Infiltration teamwork benefit has a task leader prerequisite of 8 ranks in both Hide and Move Silently, and a team member prerequisite of 1 rank in Hide or Move Silently. This means that at least one character in the group must have 8 or more ranks in each of the two skills, while each other character in the team must have at least 1 rank in either of the two skills. When the team is sneaking around, the task leader directs her less adept comrades in stealth techniques, covering any extra noise with environmental sounds, and so on.

A team (see The Team Roster, below) gets one teamwork benefit for every 4 Hit Dice the lowest-level member of the

CREATURES AND TEAMWORK

Creatures with an Intelligence score of 1 or 2 can be included on a team only if they learn the teamwork trick. Creatures that don't have an Intelligence score can never be part of a team.

Teaching an animal the teamwork trick requires a DC 20 Handle Animal check made as part of teamwork training. This trick allows the animal to be part of a team and thus benefit from any teamwork benefits enjoyed by the team. The animal must still meet any team member prerequisite required by the benefit.

team has, so it earns a new teamwork benefit whenever that character attains a new level evenly divisible by 4. If that character's level later drops below the required level (due to energy drain or being brought back from the dead), the team retains all its current teamwork benefits but doesn't gain a new one until the lowest-level character regains his or her lost level(s) plus four more levels.

Anytime a team gains a new teamwork benefit, it also has the option to swap out a previously known teamwork benefit for a new one for which the team qualifies. In effect, the team can elect to lose one teamwork benefit in order to gain two others. This is most often done when the team roster has changed in such a way as to make a previously known teamwork benefit no longer useful.

Unless otherwise specified, each teamwork benefit can be taken only once. The teamwork benefit applies whenever the characters on the team can communicate with each other, whether verbally, with gestures, or by magical means.

THE TEAM ROSTER

Teamwork benefits are based on the notion that once characters have spent time training with their comrades, they respond instinctively to subtle changes in body language and can anticipate their comrades' likely moves. A group of people (PCs or NPCs) must train together for at least two weeks before all members of the group are eligible to share the same teamwork benefits. The PCs will undoubtedly occupy most of the positions on the team, but cohorts, animal companions, paladin mounts, familiars, and recurring NPC allies can also be members of a team.

A team must have at least two members and no more than eight. To join a team, a character must have an Intelligence score of 3 or higher.

To maintain their teamwork benefits, the characters on a team must train together for at least four one-week periods per year. These training periods need not be consecutive and can happen at the same time as training to earn the new class features of a given level (as described above), so in most cases PCs won't have to spend additional time to keep their teamwork skills sharp.

To add a new character to a team (often because a previous character died or otherwise left the group), that character must train with the other characters on the team for at least two weeks, learning the nuances and standard operating procedures of the team. This training can occur during the training time required to gain the benefits of a new level.

A character can join an adventuring party without joining the team that includes other members of the party. In this case, he doesn't gain any teamwork benefits, but neither does his lack of prerequisites count against the team's qualification for the benefits.

A character leaves a team at his option or by consensus of the other members of that team.

DESIGNING YOUR OWN TEAMWORK BENEFITS

When designing your own teamwork benefits, ask yourself: Is this a specific tactic, or is it an accumulation of countless small benefits? If the benefit you imagine is analogous to a specific sequence of actions, it's not a teamwork benefit, just a smart tactic. If the benefit emerges from familiarity among the characters and a shared understanding of general techniques, then it's a teamwork benefit.

TEAMWORK BENEFIT DESCRIPTIONS

Here is the format for teamwork benefit descriptions.

Benefit Name

Description of what the benefit does or represents.

Training: A brief discussion of the training procedure required to acquire the benefit.

Task Leader Prerequisite: A base attack bonus, a feat or feats, a minimum number of ranks in one or more skills, a class feature, or some other requirement that at least one character on the team must have in order for the team to acquire this benefit. This entry is absent if a teamwork benefit has no task leader prerequisite. A benefit can have more than one task leader prerequisite; the same character must meet all task leader prerequisites for a particular benefit.

Team Member Prerequisite: These requirements must be met by every member of the team in order for the team to acquire this benefit. This entry is absent if a teamwork benefit has no team member prerequisite. A benefit can have more than one team member prerequisite. If another teamwork benefit is given as a team member prerequisite, all members of the team must qualify for the prerequisite teamwork benefit before the new benefit can be acquired.

Benefit: What the teamwork benefit enables the team members to do.

Tips: Advice for players and DMs using this teamwork benefit.

Door Procedures

Your team is accomplished at identifying and eliminating traps and other threats at doors.

Training: By studying common door traps, practicing listening techniques, and remaining alert for tiny clues that precede a triggered trap, you gradually develop a routine that enables your team to examine a door with minimum risk to the team.

Task Leader Prerequisite: Listen 8 ranks, Search 8 ranks.

A team trained in door procedures can pass most any portal without risking harm

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Team Member Prerequisite: Listen 1 rank or Search 1 rank.

Benefit: When listening at or searching a door or similar portal, the task leader gains a +1 circumstance bonus on his Listen and Search checks for each team member within 10 feet of the door.

If the task leader chooses to take 20 on a Listen or Search check made at a door, he can do so in half the normal time (as if he had made ten attempts, rather than twenty).

Tips: The door procedures teamwork benefit is a good way to quickly adjudicate each door you approach in a dungeon. You can quickly make the rolls and get on with the encounter on the other side. Be ready to make these rolls when you find a closed door in the dungeon. Then make the Listen check or the Search check, and either deal with the trap you find or get ready to open the door. Keep in mind that you might be able to take 10 or take 20 on these checks.

Field Medic Training

Your comrades can quickly stabilize grievous wounds so that a fallen ally doesn't succumb to blood loss and trauma.

Training: To gain this benefit, your team receives instruction from accomplished healers and practices on the wounded.

Task Leader Prerequisite: Heal 8 ranks.

Team Member Prerequisite: Heal 1 rank.

Benefit: If two team members each attempt to stabilize the same dying creature in the same round, the second attempt automatically succeeds.

Tips: The fastest members of the team can reach a fallen comrade most quickly.

Friendly Fire Evasion

By attuning yourself to minute, almost subliminal changes in your environment, you get just enough warning to avoid damaging area spells cast by your allies.

Training: During the training procedure for this benefit, the spellcasters on your team cast *lightning bolts*, *fireballs*, *flame strikes*, and other area spells in their arsenal, and other team members stand on the fringes of the spells' area, their senses perked for the whiff of brimstone, the crackle of static electricity, or the barely audible hum that occurs an instant before such spells go off. Then you practice ducking, dodging, and covering so that you avoid the damage from those spells.

Task Leader Prerequisite: Spellcraft 4 ranks, evasion ability.

Team Member Prerequisite: Base Reflex save +2, Spellcraft 1 rank.

Benefit: You gain the evasion ability (see page 41 of the *Player's Handbook*), but only concerning spells cast by your team members.

Tips: Use this teamwork benefit to keep tough characters in the front line despite allied damaging spells raining down around them. Of course, you still need a pretty good Reflex save bonus to take full advantage of this benefit.

Gaze Aversion

When facing a monster with a gaze attack (such as a medusa), you are adept at avoiding its dangerous gaze.

Training: Your team practices concise verbal descriptions, often in code, and maneuvering according to those descriptions. Eventually you're able to avoid looking at your target except when it's absolutely necessary, keeping track of the battle through the shouted instructions of your comrades.

Task Leader Prerequisite: Spot 8 ranks.

Team Member Prerequisite: Spot 1 rank.

Benefit: As long as at least one team member is looking directly at the gaze-attack monster, any team member averting his eyes need not make a save against the gaze attack.

Tips: To make this teamwork benefit as effective as possible, it's best if the spotter is beyond the area the gaze attack affects, is naturally immune to the effect of the gaze, or at least has the best saving throw among the team members.

Infiltration

You are adept at moving silently and unseen. You point out noisy ground to your comrades, identify good hiding places for one another, and otherwise move as unobtrusively as possible. You dart ahead while your teammates watch for enemies, then you cover your comrades while they advance. While this teamwork benefit doesn't help much amid the tumult of a pitched battle, you're able to sneak behind enemy lines to attack enemy leaders, sabotage siege engines, and otherwise give your army the upper hand before the trumpets sound.

Training: Infiltration training involves hours of practice sneaking as a group. Elves and other woodland denizens often play elaborate games of hide-and-seek (with the seeking team getting useful practice as scouts). Subterranean races stalk the caverns and tunnels of their realms, practicing the art of hiding in a pitch-black environment. With practice, members of an infiltration team get good at sharing hiding spaces, darting from cover to cover, and timing their movements to be as silent and stealthy as possible.

Task Leader Prerequisite: Hide 8 ranks, Move Silently 8 ranks.

Team Member Prerequisite: Hide 1 rank or Move Silently 1 rank.

Benefit: Your team can move at full speed without taking a –5 penalty on Hide and Move Silently checks. Other penalties (such as from difficult terrain) still apply, and you take the normal penalties on Hide or Move Silently checks while attacking, running, or charging. Team members are always visible to each other despite their Hide check results and the presence of anything less than total concealment (although cover might still block line of sight between team members). If you move to a position where none of your comrades can see or contact you, you lose the teamwork benefit at the start of your next turn and don't count as part of the team until you reestablish contact with at least one member.

Tips: If you're part of an infiltration team, keep in mind that you can take 10 on your Hide and Move Silently checks whenever you aren't being threatened or distracted. It's often easiest to just tell the DM what the lowest Hide and Move Silently check results on the team are. Those check results set the DC for NPCs' Spot and Listen checks.

Invisibility Sweep

If you're aware of the presence of an unseen enemy, you can quickly move through an area and pinpoint your foe's location.

Training: You practice finding invisible enemies by swinging your weapons through empty spaces and making sudden movements that an invisible foe wouldn't anticipate. More important, you quickly develop a shorthand way of describing the location of an unseen enemy you have pinpointed—"At my 4 o'clock, 10 feet out," for example. Eventually, members of your team can quickly and effectively target a specific (apparently empty) square based on your verbal description.

Task Leader Prerequisite: Blind-Fight.

Benefit: Each team member can check for the presence of an invisible enemy by groping into four adjacent 5-foot squares within reach, making touch attacks into those squares as described on page 295 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Doing so is a standard action. If one team member pinpoints the location of an invisible enemy (whether through groping, Spot and Listen checks, or other means), every other team member within earshot also has that enemy pinpointed until that enemy moves into a different square. (Pinpointed invisible enemies still gain the benefit of total concealment; see page 152 of the *Player's Handbook*.)

Joint Bull Rush

Shoulder to shoulder with your allies, you can blast into the ranks of your enemies, knocking them back with your combined force.

Training: You and your teammates practice charging wooden tackling dummies all at the same time, moving

in lockstep and delivering a powerful push at the same moment. Eventually you get so good that you leave only splintered and sagging dummies in your wake.

Task Leader Prerequisite: Improved Bull Rush.

Benefit: To perform a joint bull rush, all the team members involved must ready the bull rush action until the turn of the member with the slowest initiative. Then all the bull rushing team members move to their target at the same time and make a single bull rush attempt using the Strength bonus of the strongest team member. Each additional team member involved in the joint bull rush applies his or her Strength bonus (minimum +1). The team members must end their movement adjacent to one another, and they all provoke attacks of opportunity from the defender (although the defender can only make a single attack unless he has the Combat Reflexes feat).

Joint Grapple Escape

You use nonverbal cues to time your struggles against a grappling enemy, applying force and leverage at just the right moment to escape the clutches of your foe.

Training: In a series of wrestling matches, you practice techniques of suddenly shifting your weight and applying maximum effort just as a comrade outside the grapple makes a similar effort—or at least distracts your opponent. Eventually, your timing improves to the point where you and your comrades are working in concert with split-second timing.

Task Leader Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +4 or Improved Grapple.

Benefit: If you successfully use the aid another action to assist an adjacent team member's next grapple check or Escape Artist check to escape from a grapple, you provide your teammate with a bonus on that check equal to +4 or your Strength modifier, whichever is higher.

Ranged Precision

You know the timing of your comrades' attacks so well that you can shift to the side for a moment, letting ranged attacks fly past you and into your enemies.

Training: You and the rest of the team watch each other shoot ranged weapons, memorizing how much time it takes to draw an arrow from a quiver, nock it, aim, and shoot. Then you internally count to measure the time between arrows, shifting yourself when you know an arrow is being fired so you don't get in the way.

Task Leader Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +4, Precise Shot.

Team Member Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +2.

Benefit: The penalty for firing a ranged weapon into a melee is cut in half (from –4 to –2) if every ally in the melee is on your team. The AC benefit your foe gets from cover is likewise cut in half (from +4 to +2) if that cover consists solely of team members.

Snap Out of It

Because you know your fellow team members so well, you can help them shake off the effects of magical compulsions.

Training: Your team is trained in a variety of effects that intentionally shake the psyche of your comrades—everything from a stinging slap to the face to an imploring "Remember us, Regdar? We're your friends. . . ."

Task Leader Prerequisite: Concentration 8 ranks or Iron Will.

Team Member Prerequisite: Concentration 1 rank.

Benefit: If a team member is known to be under the sway of a compulsion effect, an adjacent team member can spend a full-round action to grant that team member a new save against the compulsion effect (as the rogue's slippery mind class feature, except that the second save need not happen in the second round of the effect).

No character can grant another team member more than one extra save against any one compulsion effect. However, multiple team members can all attempt to help the same character.

Tips: This benefit only works if you know that your team members have been subverted by a compulsion effect. Spellcraft checks can identify that a spell such as *dominate person* has been cast, and a Sense Motive check can detect that the behavior of one of your team members is being influenced by an enchantment.

Spell Barrage

By coordinating the release of your spells, you're able to catch your foes when they're unable to evade the effects.

Training: By observing your fellow spellcasters as they're working magic, you're able to time your spells so they finish when your enemies are off-balance from the first spell.

Task Leader Prerequisite: Spellcraft 8 ranks.

Team Member Prerequisite: Spellcraft 2 ranks.

Benefit: This benefit is triggered when a team member first casts a spell requiring a Reflex save. Whether they succeed or fail on the save, all enemies within its area take a –2 penalty on Reflex saves for each subsequent Reflex save attempted that round against an effect created by another member of the same team.

Tips: Obviously, the more Reflex-save-requiring area spells you can cast during the round, the better. Consider giving team members that are secondary spellcasters or have ranks in Use Magic Device a scroll or wand with an area spell for such occasions.

Spellcaster Guardian

You have a keen sense of the timing of the spellcasters on your team, so you can often protect them from enemies when their spells are about to go off.

Training: Over a period of weeks, you closely observe your comrades as they cast spells, noting the exact gestures

and phrases they use when they are at their most distracted. You learn the idiosyncrasies of your allies' spellcasting techniques so well that you know exactly where they are in the spellcasting process just by watching and listening to them, even if you don't know what the words and gestures mean.

Task Leader Prerequisite: Combat Reflexes, Spellcraft 4 ranks.

Team Member Prerequisite: Dexterity 13 or Spellcraft 1 rank.

Benefit: If a spellcaster on your team provokes attacks of opportunity by casting a spell, a team member adjacent to the spellcaster can interpose herself between the spellcaster and one or more attackers at the last moment, taking upon herself attacks of opportunity meant for the spellcaster. The team member can intercept a number of attacks of opportunity equal to 1 + her Dexterity bonus. Resolve each attack as normal, using the interposing team member's Armor Class. If the attack hits, it damages the interposing character but doesn't distract the spellcaster.

Superior Flank

Your team is good at harrying foes by surrounding them. If two of you get into flanking positions, you can both time your attacks to take maximum advantage of the enemy's divided attention. Enemies get so distracted that every attacker benefits.

Training: This teamwork benefit happens only after all the members of the team spend countless hours practicing two-on-one, three-on-one, and other unbalanced melee combats. Eventually the team members develop split-second timing and a keen perception of where the enemy is concentrating his defensive efforts.

Task Leader Prerequisite: Sneak attack +4d6.

Team Member Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +3.

Benefit: Whenever two members of your team flank the same enemy, all members of the team can make melee attacks against that enemy as if they also flanked her. Creatures that can't be flanked are unaffected.

Furthermore, if at least two members of your team are flanking a foe who has the improved uncanny dodge ability, add together the rogue levels of all team members engaged in melee with that foe to determine whether she can be flanked. If the sum of your teammates' rogue levels is four more than the foe has Hit Dice, all members of your team can flank that foe.

Tips: If your team has this benefit, you get the +2 bonus for flanking on your melee attacks more frequently. You'll want to study how to flank unusually large creatures (see page 153 of the *Player's Handbook*).

ACQUIRING A COMPANION SPIRIT

The process of attracting a companion spirit begins with a group of at least two and no more than eight creatures gathering for a brief magic ritual.

The creatures in the group must each have at least 4 Hit Dice and an Intelligence score of 3 or higher. Other than the Hit Dice requirement, the requirements for connecting

Illus. by K. Andrasofsky

Team members use a spell barrage to cut off their opponents' escape

with a companion spirit are the same as for establishing a team roster, and in the vast majority of cases, the PCs will use the same roster for both team-based benefits. No creature can be connected to more than one companion spirit, since the second spirit won't establish a connection to a creature already under another spirit's companionship.

The hour-long ritual to attract and bind a companion spirit requires one of the creatures on the team to succeed on a DC 15 Spellcraft check. The ritual is simple enough that a PC can simply take 10 on it—there's no consequence for failure other than a wasted hour. By burning a series of rare reagents (worth 300 gp per team member), the team convinces a companion spirit to approach. The exact order of the reagents burned determines the kind of companion spirit that approaches, chosen from those described below.

Once attracted, the companion spirit connects to each character in turn, taking a measure of their life force (300 XP each). Once the companion spirit has bound itself to the team, the ritual is nearly complete. By consensus, the team members choose the companion spirit's characteristics, selecting one from the list of general qualities and one from the list of specific qualities. Once the team makes this choice, they gain the 1st-tier benefits associated with each chosen quality, and the ritual is complete.

Companion Spirits and the Team

The magical benefits the companion spirit provides are useful but not flashy or overtly powerful. These qualities encourage teamwork among team members by using the companion spirit as a conduit for magical energy or providing a floating bonus that the team decides jointly how to spend.

Unless stated otherwise, using a companion spirit's benefit is a free action usable once per team member's turn. The benefit doesn't manifest itself in any visible or audible way unless stated.

Changing the Team: As long as the companion spirit is connected to fewer than eight creatures, a character can join a team under the companionship of a spirit by performing the ritual at the highest level the team has attained (according to Table 6–9 below). Only the creature joining the team must pay the XP cost; the other team members need only be present for the ritual and assent to the creature's joining the team. The reagent cost for the ritual is based on the total team membership, however, including the new member.

A creature can disconnect from a companion spirit by spending an hour in meditation and burning a small amount (50 gp worth) of the same reagents that first attracted the companion spirit—in reverse order. Doing so requires no skill in Spellcraft or specific ritual trappings. Once the reagents have been burned and the meditation completed, the creature no longer has any of the benefits of the team.

Improving a Companion Spirit

A companion spirit can become more powerful, just as the creatures under its companionship improve.

Periodically, the team can gather together and repeat the ritual that connected them to the companion spirit in the first place. When they do so, they get a chance to exchange more of their life energy (represented as experience points) for greater magical benefits from the companion spirit.

The team has an opportunity to perform the ritual and gain a new magical benefit every time the lowest-level creature on the team gains 3 Hit Dice, starting at 7th level. If that character's level drops below the required level (due to death or level drain), the team retains its companion spirit benefits but won't gain new ones until the lowest-level character regains his or her lost levels plus three more levels.

The rituals require more expensive reagents and a greater XP cost as the creatures in the team gain levels.

Table 6–9: Companion Spirit Ritual Costs

Lowest-Level Character	Reagent Cost (per team member)	XP Cost (per team member)	Benefit
4th	300 gp	300 XP	1st-tier
7th	700 gp	750 XP	2nd-tier
10th	1,500 gp	1,200 XP	3rd-tier
13th	3,000 gp	1,650 XP	4th-tier
16th	7,500 gp	2,100 XP	5th-tier

Companion Spirit Benefits

When a team first connects with a companion spirit, the team chooses a specific quality and a general quality,

COMPANION SPIRIT PERSONALITIES

Companion spirits are intentionally without personalities of their own, and they don't directly interact with the PCs. In a group full of characters, familiars, animal companions, cohorts, and other NPCs, the disembodied personality of the companion spirit is just one more voice in the tumult. But if the group wants to interact with its companion spirit, you can have it communicate in some fashion and give it whatever personality you wish.

Likewise, the companion spirits described below aren't directly connected to alignments, deities, or organizations because such powers already have instruments to aid or thwart the PCs. If you give companion spirits personalities and have them interact with PCs, however, you might consider going all the way and providing them with goals and motives of their own.

gaining the 1st-tier benefit from both characteristics. Each time thereafter that the team performs the ritual to improve the companion spirit (according to the schedule shown in Table 6–9: Companion Spirit Ritual Costs), the spirit receives the next higher tier benefit from the two benefit categories that it already possesses.

Table 6–10: Companion Spirit Benefits

General Characteristics	
Communication	Provides magical communication between team members
Magical storage	Stores spells that team members can cast
Salve	Healing of hit point and ability damage
Transference	Share abilities between team members
Specific Characteristics	
Chain	Enhances team's social dominance
Corrosion	Gives team affinity to acid and poison
Flame	Gives team affinity to fire
Frost	Gives team affinity to cold
Lens	Enhances team's senses and sight
Lightning	Gives team affinity to electricity
Rampart	Enhances team's defense by reducing number of hits
Shadow	Enhances team's stealthiness
Shroud	Wards team against death
Thunder	Gives team affinity to sound
Tower	Enhances team's defense and resiliency

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The team chooses one of the following four general characteristics for its companion spirit.

Communication Benefits

Your companion spirit allows communication through the magical conduits that bind members of your team.

1st-Tier Benefit: Team members can talk to each other as though connected by a *message* spell (see page 253 of the *Player's Handbook*) for 1 round per day per each person on the team, split up as each team member likes. For example, if there are eight people on your team, you can use the *message* benefit for 3 rounds before an encounter, then 4 rounds later in the day, and you'd still have 1 round of communication left.

2nd-Tier Benefit: The team shares a permanent *status* effect, as described on page 284 of the *Player's Handbook*.

3rd-Tier Benefit: The team can send messages great distances through the air, as the *whispering wind* spell, though the destination of each message is limited to the locations of other team members. The team can send one such message each day for each team member.

4th-Tier Benefit: Team members can telepathically communicate through a *Rary's telepathic bond* for 1 minute per day per team member.

5th-Tier Benefit: Each team member can use *scrying* (as the spell) on another team member for 1 round per day per creature on the team. For example, with six people on your team, you could scry on one of them for 2 rounds and another for 4 rounds. You instinctively sense when a team member is scrying you, so you know it's safe to intentionally fail the Will save the spell requires.

Magical Storage Benefits

Your companion spirit stores magical energy that can be used by all members of the team.

1st-Tier Benefit: Your companion spirit can hold a 1st-level spell, which each team member can release. Once per day, a spellcaster on the team casts the spell into the companion spirit (ignoring usual targeting requirements). At any point during the following 24 hours, each team member can release the spell as if it were a spell trigger item with a caster level of 1st, but the team member need not have spellcasting ability. The spellcaster makes all choices the spell requires (other than targeting) when originally casting the spell. Each team member can use the stored spell only once, and must abide by targeting restrictions and line of effect when casting the spell. You can't use the companion spirit to store spells with a target entry of personal, and it won't store 0-level spells.

2nd-Tier Benefit: As above, but your companion spirit can hold a spell of up to 2nd level, and the caster level of the spell becomes 3rd level. This replaces the 1st-tier benefit.

3rd-Tier Benefit: As above, but your companion spirit can hold a spell of up to 3rd level, and the caster level of the spell becomes 5th level. This replaces the 2nd-tier benefit.

4th-Tier Benefit: As above, but your companion spirit can hold a spell of up to 4th level, and the caster level of the spell becomes 7th level. This replaces the 3rd-tier benefit.

5th-Tier Benefit: As above, but your companion spirit can hold a spell of up to 5th level, and the caster level of the spell becomes 9th level. This replaces the 4th-tier benefit.

Salve Benefits

This companion spirit provides the succor of healing, mending the wounds of those under its protection.

1st-Tier Benefit: Each day, the companion spirit offers a pool of curative magic equal to 3 hit points times the number of team members. For example, a six-creature team would have 18 points of curative magic in its pool. A team member can claim all or part of curative magic as a standard action, healing 1 point of damage for every point taken out of the pool. Once part of the pool is claimed, the size of the pool shrinks accordingly for the rest of the day.

2nd-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 1st-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit, except that the pool is equal to 6 hit points times the number of team

Illus. by G. Kubic

Vadania leads the ceremony to summon a companion spirit

members. You can also use the companion spirit to heal ability damage, at a cost of 4 hit points of healing for each point of ability damage restored. You can heal either hit point damage or ability damage as a standard action, but not both in the same action.

3rd-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 2nd-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit, except that the pool increases to 9 hit points times the number of team members, and members can claim all or part of the curative magic with a move action.

4th-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 3rd-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit, except that the pool equals 12 hit points times the number of team members.

5th-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 4th-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit, except that the pool increases to 15 hit points times the number of team members, and members can claim all or part of the curative magic with a swift action (see page 237).

Transference Benefits

The tendrils that connect your team together are conduits for a variety of effects.

1st-Tier Benefit: Once per day, anyone on the team can claim all or part of a +4 morale bonus on his or her next saving throw. Once claimed, the bonus is unavailable to the rest of the team. For example, if you claim a +2 morale bonus on your next save, the other members of your team have only a +2 bonus remaining to be claimed. (Most team members get a consensus before claiming the bonus.)

2nd-Tier Benefit: As a move action, you can voluntarily accept a –2 penalty on your next attack roll to give another team member a +2 circumstance bonus on his or her next attack roll against the same enemy. Your ally doesn't get the bonus until you actually make the attack with the –2 penalty.

3rd-Tier Benefit: Once per day as a move action, each team member can voluntarily take 10 points of damage to give another team member 10 temporary hit points, which last for up to 10 minutes.

4th-Tier Benefit: Once per day as an immediate action, each team member can grant his save bonus (including any magic, ability score, class, and race-based bonuses) to another team member. You effectively attempt the saving throw on behalf of your comrade, lending them your ability through the companion spirit. (See page 237 for the definition of an immediate action.)

5th-Tier Benefit: Once per day, you can target one team member with a spell and have it take effect on

Illus. by W. O'Connor

Regdar is surrounded by a chain companion spirit's mist that evokes sadness in his foes

another team member. The magic is transferred through the companion spirit to the true target. For example, you could cast a touch spell such as *cure critical wounds* on a nearby ally, using this benefit to heal a gravely injured team member who's too far away to reach. The spell also affects the team member you actually touch. You can't use the companion spirit to transfer spells with a target entry of personal, however.

SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS

The team chooses one of the following specific types of companion spirit and gains the accompanying benefits.

Chain Companion Spirit Benefits

Chain companion spirits seem interested in interpersonal connections between the creatures in their care, with a strong affinity for social hierarchies and situations of social dominance.

1st-Tier Benefit: Each day, the companion spirit offers a bonus pool on Intimidate checks equal to twice the number of team members. For example, a five-creature team would have a +10 bonus pool. A team member can claim up to half (round up) of the Intimidate bonus by taking a free action to do so prior to making a Intimidate check. Once part of the bonus pool is claimed, the size of the bonus pool shrinks accordingly for the rest of the day.

2nd-Tier Benefit: The companion spirit makes your compulsion spells more convincing, granting +1 to the effective caster level for level-dependent spell variables such as damage dice or range, and for caster level checks on compulsion spells cast by team members.

3rd-Tier Benefit: The companion spirit can surround the team members in a thin gray mist that doesn't obscure sight but evokes great sadness in the team's enemies (equivalent to a *crushing despair* spell, except that it's not a cone). The Will save DC is Charisma-based, and the caster level for the *crushing despair* effect equals the Hit Dice of the lowest-level team member.

The mist surrounds each team member that activates it out to a 10-foot radius. Any team member can activate or deactivate the mist with a move action, but the total duration on a teamwide basis is limited to 2 rounds per team member. A team of six could have the mist surround one member for 6 rounds, or they could get 2 rounds each, for example.

4th-Tier Benefit: Once per day, each team member can call on the power of the companion spirit for a *lesser geas* spell-like ability with a caster level equal to the Hit Dice of the lowest-level team member. The save DC is Charisma-based.

5th-Tier Benefit: Once per day, each team member can call on the power of the companion spirit for a *dominate person* spell-like ability with a caster level equal to the Hit Dice of the lowest-level team member. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Corrosion Companion Spirit Benefits

The forces of acid and decay are affinities for this companion spirit, which delights in gradual destruction and collapse.

1st-Tier Benefit: Each team member can call on the companion spirit as a standard action to gain resistance to

acid 5 for 10 minutes, as the companion spirit consumes some of the corrosive damage for itself. Team members activate their resistance on an individual basis and don't need to have the benefit running at the same time.

2nd-Tier Benefit: When a team member makes an attack that includes poison (whether from natural venom or poison on a weapon), the DC of the Fortitude saves to avoid the poison damage are increased by 1. Furthermore, attempts to sunder an object (such as an opponent's weapon) deal an extra 2 points of damage.

3rd-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 1st-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit, except that each team member gains permanent resistance to acid 5.

4th-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 2nd-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit, except that the DC of poison saves is increased by 2, and sunder attacks deal an extra 4 points of damage.

5th-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 3rd-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit, except that each team member gains permanent resistance to acid 15.

Flame Companion Spirit Benefits

The flame spirit has no connection to fire elementals or other denizens of the Elemental Plane of Fire, but it has a fundamental affinity for flame and the destruction it wreaks.

1st-Tier Benefit: Each team member can call on the companion spirit as a standard action to gain resistance to fire 5 for 10 minutes, as the companion spirit consumes some of the fire for itself. Team members activate their resistance on an individual basis and don't need to have the benefit running at the same time.

2nd-Tier Benefit: The companion spirit stokes the flames of your magic, granting +1 spell power (+1 effective caster level for level-dependent spell variables such as damage dice or range, and for caster level checks) on fire spells cast by team members and an additional 1 point of fire damage dealt by team members wielding a weapon that deals fire damage (everything from a torch to a *flame tongue longsword*).

3rd-Tier Benefit: As the 1st-tier benefit, except that each team member gains permanent resistance to fire 5.

4th-Tier Benefit: As the 2nd-tier benefit, but spellcasters gain +2 spell power on fire spells, and weapons that deal fire damage deal an extra 1d6 points of fire damage.

5th-Tier Benefit: As the 3rd-tier benefit, except that each team member gains permanent resistance to fire 15.

Frost Companion Spirit Benefits

Frost companion spirits crave cold (insofar as companion spirits have motivations).

1st-Tier Benefit: Each team member can call on the companion spirit as a standard action to gain resistance to cold 5 for 10 minutes, as the companion spirit consumes some of the chill for itself. Team members activate their resistance on an individual basis and don't need to have the benefit running at the same time.

2nd-Tier Benefit: The companion spirit augments the chill of your magic, granting +1 spell power (+1 effective caster level for level-dependent spell variables such as damage dice or range, and for caster level checks) on cold spells cast by team members and an additional 1 point of cold damage dealt by team members wielding a weapon that deals cold damage.

3rd-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 1st-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit, except that each team member gains permanent resistance to cold 5.

4th-Tier Benefit: As the 2nd-tier benefit, but spellcasters gain +2 spell power on cold spells, and weapons that deal cold damage deal an extra 1d6 points of cold damage.

5th-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 3rd-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit, except that each team member gains permanent resistance to cold 15.

Lens Companion Spirit Benefits

Lens companion spirits are devoted to enhancing the senses of the creatures under their protection.

1st-Tier Benefit: Each day, the companion spirit offers a bonus pool on Spot checks equal to the number of team members. For example, a five-creature team would have a +5 bonus pool. A team member can claim all or part of the Spot bonus by taking a free action to do so prior to making a Spot check. Once part of the bonus pool is claimed, the size of the bonus pool shrinks accordingly for the rest of the day.

2nd-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 1st-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit except that the bonus pool can also be spent on Listen and Search checks.

3rd-Tier Benefit: Team members can see each other as long as they have line of effect to one another, even if ambient light conditions wouldn't allow them to do so. If it's too dark to see a fellow team member, you can see him and everything within 10 feet of him with black-and-white vision (like darkvision). You can also see everything within 10 feet of yourself as if you had darkvision.

4th-Tier Benefit: The companion spirit can render visible an unseen foe (as an *invisibility purge* spell with a caster level equal to the Hit Dice of the lowest-level team member). It can do so for a total of 2 rounds per team member. Any team member can activate or deactivate the *invisibility purge* effect with a move action, but the total duration on a teamwide basis is limited to 2 rounds per team member. A team of six could have one member as the center of an *invisibility purge* for 12 rounds, or they could get 2 rounds each, for example.

5th-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 3rd-tier benefit. It is identical to that effect except that you can see everything within 30 feet of another team member, regardless of ambient light conditions, and everything within 30 feet of yourself.

Lightning Companion Spirit Benefits

This companion spirit has an affinity for bright flashes of light, quick movement, and electricity in all its forms.

1st-Tier Benefit: Each team member can call on the companion spirit as a standard action to gain resistance to electricity 5 for 10 minutes, as the companion spirit consumes some of the electrical damage for itself. Team members activate their resistance on an individual basis and don't need to have the benefit running at the same time.

2nd-Tier Benefit: Once per day, each team member can call on the power of the companion spirit for an *expeditious retreat* spell-like ability with a caster level equal to the Hit Dice of the lowest-level team member.

3rd-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 1st-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit, except that each team member gains permanent resistance to electricity 5.

4th-Tier Benefit: Once per day, each team member can call on the power of the companion spirit for a *haste* spell-like ability with a caster level equal to the Hit Dice of the lowest-level team member. Unlike the standard *haste* spell, this spell-like ability affects only the individual team members, but other team members can activate the power for themselves if they wish.

5th-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 3rd-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit, except that each team member gains permanent resistance to electricity 15.

Rampart Companion Spirit Benefits

Rampart spirits seem to draw sustenance from combat—specifically by twisting fate so that successful blows turn into misses.

1st-Tier Benefit: Each day, the companion spirit offers a bonus pool to Armor Class equal to double the number of team members. For example, a five-creature team would have a +10 bonus pool. A team member can claim up to half (round up) of the available Armor Class bonus by taking an immediate action to do so after the attack is announced, but before the attack result is known. (See page 237 for the definition of an immediate action.) The bonus is considered an insight bonus to AC and lasts only for that attack. Once part of the bonus pool is claimed, the size of the bonus pool shrinks accordingly for the rest of the day.

2nd-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 1st-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit except that the size of the bonus pool to AC is equal to three times the number of team members. At most, a team member can claim half the bonus pool's maximum size for a single attack. For example, a six-member team would have a +18 bonus pool to AC, and a team member could take up to a +9 bonus on any single attack.

Illus. by G. Kubic

Thanks to their lens companion spirit, Alhandra and Ember take the fight to an ogre mage no longer protected by invisibility

Illus. by D. Scott

Their rampart companion spirit protects Tordek, Jozan, and Lidda against the attacks of their foes

3rd-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 2nd-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit except that the insight bonuses to AC last for 1 round.

4th-Tier Benefit: The companion spirit can extrude its energy so it surrounds a team member in a coruscating nimbus of yellow-orange energy that provides concealment (and a corresponding 20% miss chance). It can do so for a total of 2 rounds per team member. Any team member can activate or deactivate the nimbus with a move action, but the total duration on a teamwide basis is limited to 2 rounds per team member. A team of four could have one member protected for 8 rounds, or they could get 2 rounds each, for example.

5th-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 4th-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit except that the nimbus provides total concealment (and a corresponding 50% miss chance).

Shadow Companion Spirit Benefits

While this spirit companion has no overt connection to undead shadows or the Plane of Shadow, it has an affinity for all things stealthy and hard to discern.

1st-Tier Benefit: Each day, the companion spirit offers a bonus pool on Hide and Move Silently checks equal to double the number of team members. For example, a five-creature team would have a +10 bonus pool. A team member can claim up to half (round up) of the Hide and Move Silently bonus by taking a free action to do so prior to making a Hide or Move Silently check; the bonus applies to both skills, so you can use it twice if you make both checks in the same round. Once part of the bonus pool is claimed, the size of the bonus pool shrinks accordingly for the rest of the day.

2nd-Tier Benefit: The companion spirit can dampen sound around a team member (as a *silence* spell with a caster level equal to the Hit Dice of the lowest-level team member). It can do so for a total of 2 rounds per team member. Any team member can activate or deactivate the *silence* effect with a move action, but the total duration on a teamwide basis is limited to 2 rounds per team member. A team of six could have one member as the center of a *silence* spell for 12 rounds, or they could get 2 rounds each, for example.

3rd-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 1st-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit, except that the bonus pool is equal to three times the number of team members.

4th-Tier Benefit: The companion spirit can render a team member unseen (as an *invisibility* spell with a caster level equal to the Hit Dice of the lowest-level team member). It can do so for a total of 2 rounds per team member. Any team member can activate or deactivate the *invisibility* effect with a move action, but the total duration on a teamwide basis is limited to 2 rounds per team member. Unlike the standard *invisibility* spell, this benefit doesn't prevent team members from seeing each other, regardless of whether they have this benefit active.

5th-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 3rd-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit, except that the bonus pool is equal to four times the number of team members.

Shroud Companion Spirit Benefits

These companion spirits tend to hover near the border between life and death, keeping the creatures in their care on the life side of that border.

1st-Tier Benefit: Team members continually have a *gentle repose* spell-like ability active on them with a caster level equal to the Hit Dice of the lowest-level team member, so their bodies do not decay for days or weeks after death.

2nd-Tier Benefit: Once per day, each team member can call on the power of the companion spirit for a *false life* spell-like ability with a caster level equal to the Hit Dice of the lowest-level team member. The temporary hit points last until the duration expires or the temporary hit points are lost in battle.

3rd-Tier Benefit: Each team member gains a +2 insight bonus on saving throws against death effects and effects employing negative energy (such as *inflict* spells), and a +2 insight bonus on Fortitude saves against massive damage.

4th-Tier Benefit: The companion spirit can render a team member immune to magical death and negative energy effects (as a *death ward* spell with a caster level equal to the Hit Dice of the lowest-level team member). It can do so for a total of 2 minutes per team member. Any team member can activate or deactivate the *death ward* effect with a move action, but the total duration on a teamwide basis is limited to 2 minutes per team member. A team of six could have one member protected by the *death ward* for 12 minutes, or they could get 2 minutes each, for example.

5th-Tier Benefit: This ability replaces the 3rd-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit, except that the saving throw bonus is +4. In addition, team members can activate their 4th-tier benefit as a swift action (see page 237).

Thunder Companion Spirit Benefits

This companion spirit seems attracted to loud sounds of all kinds—it's not for the stealthy or unobtrusive.

1st-Tier Benefit: Each team member can call on the companion spirit as a standard action to gain resistance to sonic 5 for 10 minutes, as the companion spirit consumes some of the energy damage itself. Team members activate their resistance on an individual basis and don't need to have the benefit running at the same time.

2nd-Tier Benefit: Once per day, each team member can call on the power of the companion spirit for a *shatter* spell-like ability with a caster level equal to the Hit Dice of the lowest-level team member. The save DC is Charisma-based.

3rd-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 1st-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit, except that each team member gains permanent resistance to sonic 5.

4th-Tier Benefit: Once per day, each team member can call on the power of the companion spirit for a *shout* spell-like ability with a caster level equal to the Hit Dice of the lowest-level team member. The save DC is Charisma-based. Unlike the standard *shout* spell, this spell-like ability doesn't affect other team members, so they can stand in its area with impunity.

5th-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 3rd-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit, except that each team member gains permanent resistance to sonic 15.

Tower Companion Spirit Benefits

Defense wins battles, and no companion spirit offers more defense than the tower companion. A kindred spirit to the rampart companion, the tower companion offers a broader range of defensive benefits.

1st-Tier Benefit: If you take a full attack action this round, you can voluntarily reduce your attack rolls by up to –5 and add the same number to a bonus pool. Any other team member can use a free action at the beginning of their turn to take 1 point from the bonus pool to gain a +1 insight bonus to their AC for 1 round. Unused points evaporate at the beginning of your next turn.

2nd-Tier Benefit: As an immediate action taken right before you attempt a saving throw, you can ask fellow team members to grant you an insight bonus on that saving throw. (See page 237 for the definition of an immediate action.) The tower companion spirit transfers fateful energy between you and your comrades, so that you gain a +1 insight bonus on that saving throw for every team member who agrees to the exchange. Team members who agree to the exchange take a –2 penalty on all saving throws for 1 round—including the saving throw from the current effect, if it affects multiple team members simultaneously (such as a *fireball*).

3rd-Tier Benefit: The companion spirit can make a team member's skin preternaturally resistant to damage (as a

stoneskin spell with a caster level equal to the Hit Dice of the lowest-level team member). It can do so for a total of 2 rounds per team member. Any team member can activate or deactivate *stoneskin* effect with a move action, but the total duration on a teamwide basis is limited to 2 rounds per team member. A team of four could have one member protected for 8 rounds, or they could get 2 rounds each, for example.

4th-Tier Benefit: This benefit replaces the 2nd-tier benefit. It is identical to that benefit, except that you gain a +2 insight bonus on that saving throw for every team member who agrees to the exchange (and accepts the –2 penalty on their own saving throws).

5th-Tier Benefit: The companion spirit can render hostile magic ineffective, granting spell resistance equal to the Hit Dice of the lowest-level team member + 12. It can do so for a total of 2 rounds per team member. Any team member can activate or deactivate the spell resistance with a move action, but the total duration on a teamwide basis is limited to 2 rounds per team member. Team members ignore this spell resistance when casting spells on each other; the tower companion spirit knows to let such spells pass through its defenses.

DESIGNING PRESTIGE CLASSES

Abilities granted by prestige classes are appropriate for mid- to high-level characters. Prestige classes are acquired only by meeting the requirements specific to each example, which almost always require—in effect—that a character be at *least* mid-level (around 5th or 6th level). Additionally, there might be nonrules-related requirements that must be met in-game, such as group membership fees, special training exercises, quests, and so on.

Prestige classes are purely optional and always under the purview of the DM. It's good policy to tightly limit the prestige classes available in your campaign. The prestige classes in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and other sources are certainly not all-encompassing or definitive. They might not even be appropriate for your campaign. The best prestige classes for your campaign are the ones you tailor-make yourself.

THE DM'S ROLE

Prestige classes allow a Dungeon Master to create exclusive, campaign-specific roles and positions. These special roles offer abilities and powers otherwise inaccessible to PCs and focus them in specific, interesting directions. A character with a prestige class will be more specialized yet perhaps slightly better than one without. These DM-created tools lend specifics and actual mechanics to the details of your world. In short, you come up with a particular group or role for your campaign, and create a prestige class based around that idea. The following material focuses on your needs as the DM.

THE PLAYERS' ROLE

DMs who don't mind sharing the responsibility of campaign development with their players might allow them to design prestige classes. As long as the DM remains involved, such prestige classes are perfectly viable. The DM knows what organizations need prestige classes in the campaign, and has general ideas of what such a prestige class should do. Players wishing to develop prestige classes should work closely with their DM to do so.

WHY CREATE A PRESTIGE CLASS?

There are four basic reasons why you should create prestige classes for your campaign.

To Satisfy Players: A player with a ranger character wants to be an expert archer. He takes Point Blank Shot and the other appropriate feats, but he wants to be able to perform even greater deeds with his bow. He's willing to sacrifice other aspects of his character to do so, but there don't seem to be options for him. In response you create the Red Arrow Guild. From the guild, he learns of a number of different trick shots and special bow-related abilities he can learn if he joins the group and takes levels in the master of the red arrow prestige class.

Players have plans or desires for their characters that extend beyond the bounds of the rules found in the *Player's Handbook*. Prestige classes provide a way for you to develop rules within a balanced format to help meet your players' needs.

To Develop an Organization: You've already created the Red Arrow Guild, a group of fighters, rangers, and even rogues who help defend the capital city in times of great distress. They have a good reputation and a long history. To help further develop this organization, you create the master of the red arrow prestige class with abilities unique to the guild. Now, when people speak of their almost-unnatural prowess, concrete facts describe exactly what they can and cannot actually do.

Prestige classes help you to define monastic orders, secret cabals, religious zealots, thieves' guilds, special military units, a group of people trained under a specific teacher, sorcerers from a particular area, or bards who studied at the same college. If you're not already creating organizations like this in your campaign, you should be. Prestige classes distinguish them from one another. If the wizards of the Arcane Order know different spells and have different abilities than the wizards of the Open Hand Guild, it makes both groups, and the campaign as a whole, more interesting.

Using prestige classes with campaign organizations also encourages player characters to join or at least investigate these groups. Prestige classes offer you a way to use the rules to draw players into your campaign world and

involve them in whatever sorts of politics, intrigues, and adventures you have in store.

To Develop a Race or Culture: As with organizations, races and cultures benefit from specific rules that showcase their abilities.

While it's fine to declare that "elves operate well in the woods," or "gnomes are tricky," such statements carry greater weight with rules to back them up. Prestige classes (the elven woodstalker and the gnome trickster, for example) provide those rules.

Cultures garner even greater benefit from prestige classes. Game rules don't provide distinctions for how the people from the Southern Kingdom in your campaign differ from the folk of the Direwood Forest. You could create an extensive description of how the spear-using warriors of the south have a completely different fighting style than the hardy, no-nonsense approach of the warriors of the Direwood. The southern speardancer and the Direwood ranger prestige classes directly speak for those differences. Culture-based prestige classes can tie into PC backgrounds; perhaps only characters from the Sunlost Desert can take the knife-fighter prestige class. It makes every culture and every populated place that you create for your campaign truly special.

To Make Otherwise Poor Options Acceptable: While this reason ties in with the first, it's worth mentioning on its own. A prestige class can take a poor choice, such as specializing in the whip, and make it worthwhile. Potentially, you could create prestige classes that grant interesting abilities for characters who spend a lot of skill points on Intimidate or a particular knowledge or craft. Characters who choose strange multiclass combinations, put their best score in Charisma (and who aren't bards or sorcerers), or come from less optimal races (goblin or kobold PCs, for example) could have access to prestige classes that make those choices worthwhile.

The Hidden Fifth Reason: Any number of organizations could oppose the PCs, along with races such as gnolls, goblins, and orcs. Some campaigns establish evil cultures as major opponents. DMs should strongly consider designing prestige classes only available to the opposition. Such classes should have a broader utility than merely taking advantage of PC weaknesses or nullifying PC strengths. They make the campaign unique, provide memorable encounters, and transform the opposition into real threats with which the PCs must reckon.

PRESTIGE CLASS OR STANDARD CLASS?

Ideally, the choice of gaining a level in the character's primary class (or only class, if not multiclassing) or taking a prestige class should be a tough decision. A prestige class might allow access to new skills or spells, but can be more restrictive than the standard class. Perhaps it has a slower attack progression or less desirable saves. If a player has a tough time deciding whether her character should take another level of rogue from the *Player's Handbook* or should start taking levels of your prestige class, you've probably balanced your prestige class correctly.

NAMING AND CORE CONCEPT

You have an advantage that no game designer can ever have: You know the specific details of your campaign. When creating a prestige class, use your knowledge of these details to their fullest. The first rule is to forget the general and embrace the specific. You're not creating a prestige class for everyone's campaign—just for yours. The examples below show how general prestige class names, when modified toward particular organizations, become more specific and therefore better defined in your campaign.

Holy warrior	Champion of Pelor
City guard	Greyhawk watchman
Martial disciple	Order of the Fist disciple
Woodsman	Darkwater Pass tracker

DESIGNING REQUIREMENTS

All prestige class requirements are based around the idea that the character who qualifies for the class is already well on his way to becoming someone who can do the things that the prestige class excels in. Someone qualifying for the Misty Peaks mountaineer prestige class should already have 6 ranks in Climb and 4 in Use Rope—in other words, he's already an expert climber when he qualifies for the elite title of mountaineer.

Two types of requirements can be used to determine who can take a prestige class. The first type is game requirements. These are hard and fast rules—often numerical values—that a character must fulfill to qualify. The second type is character requirements. These can be aspects of a character—race, age, religion, and so on—as well as deeds that the character has accomplished. For example, a candidate for the hunter of the dead prestige

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: WHY REQUIREMENTS?

First, there's the idea of "prestige." If any commoner can qualify for the class, the class lacks prestige. Second, prestige classes offer powerful abilities not normally available to characters. Requirements impose a cost, so that characters don't get something for nothing. Similarly, taking a level of a prestige class should never be a more obvious or desirable choice than taking a level of a standard class. Requirements force characters to consider which they wish to do.

class, which specializes in fighting undead, must have had a negative level bestowed by an energy draining undead. Sometimes these are simply roleplaying hooks that tie into the organization or culture that a prestige class represents, such as pledging allegiance to a monarch, paying initial membership dues, or performing a specific religious rite. Use nongame mechanics requirements to add life and flavor to prestige classes, but don't use them for game balance purposes.

No requirement should be based on a die roll. That means that ability scores (or ability score bonuses), hit points, or other aspects of a character determined by a die should never be used as a prestige class requirement. Requirements should be based on choices—feats, skills ranks, and the like.

Further, remember that prestige classes do not map to existing classes. That is to say, no prestige class should limit itself to members of a regular class. Class and level are not good requirements. That said, once you assign a set number of ranks, feats, and so on as requirements, it's not difficult to figure out which class can meet those requirements at what level. Rogues can attain the assassin prestige class in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, for example, quicker (at 5th level) than other classes, but even wizards could potentially meet the requirements (at 13th level).

No prestige class should be attainable by a character lower than 5th level.

Good Requirements

The following requirements help define the type of characters who might wish to qualify for a given prestige class.

Skill Ranks: The requirement is a number of ranks in one or more specific skills, not total skill bonus. Skill requirements might each require different ranks. Skill ranks make it easier for members of certain standard classes to enter the prestige class, if the skill in question is on their class skill list. Skill ranks also set class level to enter the prestige class (see Table 3–2: Experience and Level-Dependent Benefits, page 22 of the *Player's Handbook*, for maximum skill ranks).

Feats: List all feat requirements, including any prerequisite armor or weapon proficiencies.

Base Attack Bonus: Do not use a modified attack roll. This requirement isn't necessary if skill ranks already set the minimum class level for the prestige class. Use this instead of stringent skill rank requirements for combat-oriented prestige classes.

Base Save Bonus: Base saving throw bonuses group character classes differently than base attack bonuses. For instance, you can choose a base Fortitude save bonus, which puts fighters, monks, and clerics on the same level, or choose a base Will save bonus requirement and have clerics, wizards, and monks all meeting the prerequisites at the same time.

Special Abilities: When used as prestige class requirements, special abilities such as evasion, rage, or turning undead might define the focus of the class.

Spellcasting Ability: This either requires the ability to cast arcane or divine spells of a certain level or the ability to cast specific spells. Requiring spells of a certain type (arcane or divine) and level opens the class to more spellcasters. Requiring specific spells might focus the prestige class to druids, bards, or wizards, depending on the spell. Since sorcerers know fewer spells than wizards, requiring a specific spell might prevent sorcerers from taking the class. Be aware of those effects of the requirement.

Domains: Some prestige classes, such as those specific to a religion or cause, might require a specific cleric domain.

Special: This category covers other game-mechanic requirements. It also includes restrictions. Character requirements can include race, gender (use rarely), alignment, patron deity (most commonly used in the Forgotten Realms setting), or accomplishments (see the sidebar).

Poor Requirements

The following requirements overly limit or restrict the type of characters who might wish to qualify for a given prestige class.

Character or Class Level: This requirement discourages creativity among players. Base attack bonus effectively

EXAMPLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Creating a prestige class requirement that describes a particular accomplishment is a good way to give the class a distinctive flavor. Depending on the concept behind the class, the accomplishment can involve combat, a journey, a mental exercise, or some other specific endeavor. Some examples are provided below.

—Kill a specific monster
—Visit a hard-to-reach shrine
—Endure an ordeal of pain
—Retrieve a rare herb
—Complete an individualized quest
—Perform a seemingly impossible task (walk on water, capture the breath of a bird)
—Win a race, duel, or other contest
—Discover a secret password
—Impress an important person with words and wit
—Create a great work of art (a song, a dance, or a painting)
—Solve a riddle
—Get a specific tattoo
—Always wear a specific color
—Always tell the truth
—Perform a daily ritual
—Tithe 10% of all wealth gained

sets a minimum character level, but not every prestige class requires a minimum base attack bonus. Let players figure out how to meet the class requirements as best they can. Concentrate on those requirements members of a prestige class would naturally all meet.

Character Class: With the ease and prevalence of multiclassing, you should let players figure out what classes, and how many levels of each, their characters need to qualify for a class.

Ability Score: Magic items aside, this makes entering a prestige class entirely a matter of luck. Not only does a player have to roll high enough when he builds his character, but he must guess what ability will give him access to a prestige class that might not exist yet.

Hit Points: Again, this makes entering a prestige class entirely a matter of luck.

Armor Class: Characters don't live in their armor. Using this requirement creates all kinds of ugly questions about how long a character must wear armor (or an armor-influencing magic item) every day to be able to earn a level of the prestige class.

Redundant Requirements: There's no point in requiring both a base attack bonus and a base save, or a base attack bonus and skill ranks, or a base save and skill ranks. Any one of these sets a level requirement to enter the class. Pick the one most appropriate for your vision of the prestige class. The exception is when only one is the "true" level requirement. You might want characters with Run, Endurance, and Combat Reflexes (which a human fighter can have at 1st level), 8 ranks in Climb and 8 ranks in Swim (which several classes can accomplish by 5th level), and a base attack bonus of +6. The feats and skills represent things you want all members of the prestige class to be able to do, while the base attack bonus sets the level requirement.

BASIC FEATURES OF PRESTIGE CLASSES

The basics shared by all classes are levels, Hit Dice, class skills and skill points, base attack bonus, and base save bonus. Table 3–1: Base Save and Base Attack Bonuses on page 22 of the *Player's Handbook* should prove very helpful when designing these aspects of your prestige classes.

Levels

In most cases, prestige classes have either five or ten designed levels. It's possible to have fifteen or even twenty. You might even design one with as few as three. Prestige classes with five or fewer levels generally fill a very specific purpose. To make achieving the requirements worthwhile, they must pack a lot of special abilities into their few levels. Prestige classes with twenty levels, on the other hand, border on the Epic (see the *Epic Level Handbook* for information on that style of play) since characters must have at least five levels in base character classes to qualify. Ten-level prestige classes have enough special abilities to attract player characters without requiring any special rules for handling characters with more than twenty levels.

Hit Dice

When you set the requirements for your prestige class, you decide what standard classes easily qualify for the class. You know what Hit Dice those classes use. You can choose to give the prestige class a larger Hit Die, the same HD, an average of the likely entry class's Hit Dice, or fewer HD. This choice is part of the balancing of the prestige class.

No class should have less than a d4 for Hit Dice, and none should have more than d12. Classes only use unmodified die rolls for hit points, though class abilities might provide bonus hit points at specific levels.

Class Skills and Skill Points

Generally speaking, the number of skill points and the number of class skills should be directly related. There's no point in having a huge list of class skills if the character doesn't have the skill points to take advantage of it. The opposite is also true: There's no point in having a stack of skill points and not having a long list of class skills on which to spend them.

Classes get two, four, six, or eight skill points, modified by the character's Intelligence. A prestige class should not "give away" the skill list, making every skill a class skill. Class skills should reflect the nature and pursuits of the prestige class.

Base Attack Bonus

Attack progression governs every form of combat, from greatswords to rays. If a combat-focused prestige class has several impressive abilities, slowing the attack progression helps balance the class. Classes with a lot of noncombat abilities might need a relative fast attack progression to keep the choice between prestige class and standard class from shifting too far in favor of the standard class.

There are four possible attack progressions. Three of them appear in Table 3–1: Base Save and Base Attack Bonuses, page 22 of the *Player's Handbook*. The fourth possibility is +0, where attack progression never improves. That should only be used in rare and extreme cases, however. Few characters will put their attack progression on hold for as few as five levels, and they certainly won't for ten.

Base Save Bonus

The progression for saving throws appears in Table 3–1: Base Save and Base Attack Bonuses, page 22 of the *Player's Handbook*. For each new prestige class, you choose whether

Illus. by W. England

Depending on the prestige class choices he makes, Tarn (center) could become a dagger-wielding assassin (left) or a fierce knight in shining armor

the class gets a single good save, two good saves, or all good saves. If the class doesn't get all good saves, choose which save or saves gets the better bonus.

In general, combat-oriented classes have good Fortitude saves, spellcasters have good Will saves, and other classes have good Reflex saves. If giving a class two good saves, use these guidelines for one of them. All good saves is a powerful lure for any class, so use it sparingly.

Feats

As a rule, bonus feats are not exciting abilities for prestige classes. Avoid lists of bonus feats.

DESIGNING ABILITIES

Every level of a prestige class should include a significant benefit. Spellcasters specifically have a difficult time justifying missing out on the new spells they gain with each level, and so prestige classes aimed at spellcasters must be particularly attractive. The first ability or abilities gained should be matched to the minimum level at which a character could possibly qualify for the class. Thus, if a ranger can qualify for the class at 4th level, the first level of the prestige class should be approximately equivalent to the 5th level a ranger might gain.

Major abilities, particularly brand-new powers, should be carefully considered. They should never be more powerful or useful than the types of things that other classes can do. Look at existing class abilities, feats, and the prestige classes in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for ideas. Borrow directly from the abilities of other classes when designing a prestige class if you need to.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency

In many cases, all you need to say is "A [prestige class name] gains no additional proficiency in any weapon or armor." Prestige classes never remove weapon or armor proficiencies. If you want to limit access to armor, you can word special abilities so they only function when class members wear light armor, or medium or light armor. If the class skill list contains skills affected by armor check penalties, then it also helps restrict armor. A third option can restrict weapons as well: Give the class a code of behavior that swears off using certain weapons, types of weapons, or armor.

For further weapon restriction, focus the special abilities on a group of weapons or specific weapon. The lasher and the master of chains, for instance, gain little if any benefit from their classes unless using a whip or a chain, respectively.

Spells, Spell Lists, and Caster Levels

Some argue that you can't design a spellcasting prestige class without making "+1 level of existing class" the spell progression. Members of the class might gain a caster level every level, every other level, or every three levels. Gaining caster levels less often than that removes spellcasting from the primary focus of the class, so the class abilities have to compensate by being more desirable.

Providing a short list of spells available to the prestige class gives spellcasting ability to characters that don't have it normally, rather than creating a true spellcasting prestige class. If providing a list, you must also provide a table showing access to the spells by class level. Table 6–11, below, provides spell access for all the standard classes.

Table 6–11: Access to Spells (By Class Level)

Spell Level	Cleric, Druid, or Wizard Level	Sorcerer Level	Bard Level*	Paladin or Ranger Level*	Adept Level*
0	1st	1st	1st	—	1st
1st	1st	1st	2nd	4th	1st
2nd	3rd	4th	4th	8th	4th
3rd	5th	6th	7th	11th	8th
4th	7th	8th	10th	14th	12th
5th	9th	10th	13th	—	16th
6th	11th	12th	16th	—	—
7th	13th	14th	—	—	—
8th	15th	16th	—	—	—
9th	17th	18th	—	—	—

*Provided character has access to bonus spells.

When assigning how many spells a character can cast at a given level, look to the *Player's Handbook* for examples of spell progression. If your prestige class prepares spells as a cleric, use the cleric and druid tables as guides. If your class prepares spells as a wizard, use the wizard table as a model. If your class doesn't prepare spells, use the sorcerer tables.

Spell lists should always have more low-level spells than high level. As a result, it's best to start the list by choosing the highest-level spells the class can know. Then you can list a greater number of spells at the level below that, and more spells still at the next lower level, and so on. For example, suppose you create a class that, like paladins and rangers, can know spells up to 4th level. The class spell list should have more 3rd-level spells than 4th, more 2nd-level spells than 3rd, and more 1st-level spells than 2nd.

A spell list should have the spells appropriate for the class and no more—for a wide variety of spells, a character can pick up a level of wizard or cleric.

Occasionally, if a spell is a "signature" spell of a prestige class, you can lower the level that the class gets the spell by one. For example, for a flame mage prestige class, *wall of fire* might be considered a 3rd-level rather than a 4th-level spell. This technique should be used sparingly. Do this only once or twice for a given class, if at all. Normally, if a class has other attractive powers or benefits, it's not necessary.

COSTS AND BALANCING

Levels in a prestige class should never be so good that a character would be foolish not to take them. Balancing the class prevents that possibility. Before working on prestige class abilities, consider what a character must give up to take the class. The things given up are the costs of entering the prestige class.

Hit Dice: Some classes clearly qualify for a prestige class sooner than others. Those classes might have to accept a smaller Hit Die when taking levels of the prestige class. For them, this is a cost, but for other classes that Hit Die might be larger. For instance, a prestige class that uses a d8 for Hit Dice has a cost for barbarians, fighters, paladins, and rangers, but it represents a benefit for bards, rogues, sorcerers, and wizards.

Skill Points: Clearly, certain classes never lose when they take a prestige class. Fighters and wizards can't have any fewer skill points than they already do, for instance. Just like with Hit Dice, one class's gain might be another class's loss. A prestige class that grants 4 skill points per level +Int modifier represents a gain for fighters and wizards, but a loss for rogues.

Class Skills: The impact of a class skill list can be tricky to judge. A class with a long skill list and commensurate skill points seems like a gain for many classes, but if the prestige class's skill list is sufficiently different from the list of the classes most attracted to it, it might not be a benefit at all.

Attack Progression: As mentioned above, base attack bonus can be a cost. A wizard or sorcerer can't have a worse

PALADINS AND MONKS

When designing prestige classes, paladins and monks call for special consideration. Because these two classes cannot multiclass freely, it's harder to persuade members to take an interest in prestige classes. When designing a prestige class whose members should include paladins, monks, or both, consider adding the following note:

Multiclass Note: Monk (or paladin, as appropriate) characters can freely multiclass with this class. Monks (or paladins) who have already taken levels in another class can again take monk (or paladin) levels after gaining a level as a [prestige class name].

A prestige class that offers a great deal of power might not need this note. A well-balanced prestige class might need it to keep the choice from shifting too far in favor of simply taking levels in the standard class.

attack progression than his standard class, but all the other classes can.

Save Progression: If a class has two or all good saves, then a prestige class with fewer good saves needs enticing abilities to draw members. For instance, a monk-focused prestige class, such as one with the slow fall (30 ft.) ability as a requirement, with only one good save needs powerful abilities to attract any but ex-monks.

Feats: Feats are a cost for a prestige class in two cases. First, requiring less optimal feats is a cost. If a prestige class requires the feats Endurance, Great Fortitude, and Run, fighters would have to give up Weapon Focus, Power Attack, and similar typical fighter feats to qualify. Requiring feats not on a class's bonus feat list also represents a special cost.

Special Abilities and Spellcasting: Both of these requirements create a cost because they might force characters to multiclass to enter a prestige class.

Domains: This requirement might force a cleric to change patron deity in order to qualify for a prestige class. The loss of domain powers and change in domain spells can be a real cost for such characters.

Special: The special requirements can impose a cost. Characters wishing to take levels of the prestige class must accept that cost. For instance, you might design a prestige class with restrictions on multiclassing similar to those placed on paladins or monks. Hunter of the dead offers another example, requiring candidates to have lost a level to the attack of an undead creature.

Special Considerations

Prestige classes tied to organizations might have ongoing requirements. These can include assignments, dues, strict obedience to specific rules, or personal sacrifices of wealth. Becoming a member of a prestige class might involve apprenticing for a time to another member, or eventually serving as a mentor for a prospective member.

Entry into a prestige class might come with strings attached. Powerful enemies seek members out, or those among the group's ranks face the prejudices of the local folk. Membership in certain prestige classes might even be illegal, particularly if they dabble in forbidden knowledge. These "strings" can come along with prestige classes that represent a specific group in the campaign world, or they can be tied to prestige classes that simply deal with knowledge. The dragonslayers might not be a formal organization, for example, but their reputation precedes them nonetheless.

Prestige Class Categories

In general, prestige classes fall into the following categories. When you're inventing your own prestige class, think about how you'd classify it—or use the categories below to inspire your creations.

Party Role Classes: Four basic roles define the classic adventuring party: combatant, sneak, arcane caster, and divine caster. Combatant classes include barbarian, fighter, monk, paladin, and ranger. Bard, monk, rogue, and ranger are examples of sneak classes. Arcane casters obviously include sorcerers and wizards, and bards as well. Cleric and druid are examples of divine caster classes, as are paladin and ranger to a lesser extent. Choices in feats, skills, spells, and class abilities all help to customize these standard classes. Party role prestige classes carry this customization a step further. The duelist's special abilities clearly set it apart from a fighter with a rapier and Weapon Finesse. The shadowdancer's abilities are very different from those of monks or rogues. The archmage and the hierophant are the arcane and divine casters, respectively, at the top of their chosen fields.

The archmage and the hierophant provide important examples of another option in prestige class design. Rather than having twenty levels (as standard classes do) or ten levels (as the arcane archer, duelist, dwarven defender, and shadowdancer do), they only have five. That's because the classes they're based on, cleric and wizard, do a good job of supporting the party roles already.

Iconic Classes: Fantasy literature has helped to define certain iconic roles. Some, such as the barbarian, are standard classes in the *Player's Handbook*. Others require prestige classes. The assassin and the blackguard are iconic images in the D&D framework, and the game could never be complete without them.

These two classes, the assassin and the blackguard, are also examples of another use for prestige classes. According to the *Player's Handbook*, "Standard characters are good or neutral but not evil. Evil alignments are for villains and monsters." These prestige classes exist for NPCs, providing you with memorable opponents to pit against the heroic PCs.

Race-Based Classes: Racial prestige classes develop a race further by providing specific rules to showcase its abilities. While each race detailed in the *Player's Handbook* has different abilities, the arcane archer and the dwarven defender help demonstrate how—through the rules—each race fits the archetypes represented in campaign worlds and fantasy traditions. You could easily create prestige classes that further define these archetypes, such as the dwarven smith, the halfling hill-scout, or the half-orc demolisher.

Situational Classes: Sometimes you want a character to really shine in a particular situation. While feats, skills, and class abilities allow that, prestige classes let you take it a step further.

The loremaster is an example of the value of advancing as a spellcaster. The loremaster continues to gain spells known, spells per day, and caster levels as if she were gaining levels in her standard class. This is extraordinarily

valuable to spellcasters, and so the class must have corresponding costs.

Game Function Classes: Game function prestige classes revolve around esoteric rules or functions, such as planar travel or psionics. Where party role prestige classes focus on party needs and situational prestige classes focus on recurring situations in a campaign, the game function prestige class specializes in one aspect of the game rules. The horizon walker, for example, focuses on long-distance travel and adapting to wilderness environments. It goes beyond what a ranger could achieve through skill selection. You could create similar classes around ranged combat, necromancy, or turning undead.

Combination Classes: Usually a character must slow development of a class feature while gaining levels in another class. A prestige class lets a character focus on those features she wants to develop while sacrificing those she doesn't. The arcane trickster is an example of crossing rogues with arcane casters. The eldritch knight crosses arcane casters with fighters or other combat-focused prestige classes. You can explore these kinds of combinations when a player expresses a desire to pick and choose among class abilities—as long as the prestige class holds commensurate costs.

PC ORGANIZATIONS

Some characters prefer an independent existence, choosing no affiliation greater than their association with the other PCs at the table. Others join larger groups of dozens, hundreds, or thousands of NPCs. Whether it's a national army, a secret society, or a pirate ship's crew, the organization a PC joins offers advantages and responsibilities that independent characters don't have. Used properly, an organization that all the PCs at your table can join strengthens the bonds between characters, immerses them further into the game world, and adds drama to their adventures.

In some ways, PC organizations are like prestige classes. Characters often have to earn their way in, they receive special benefits to match their special membership, and the group they choose suggests a particular way of life.

The ideal PC organization is something that everyone at your gaming table, regardless of race or class, wants to join. Organizations tend to have long-term goals that the PCs can jointly achieve. If a class or prestige class is the answer to the "Who am I?" question, the PC organization is the answer to the "Who are we?" question.

CAMPAIGN BENEFITS

A good PC organization takes some work for the DM to create, but it provides three main benefits for your ongoing campaign.

It Improves PC Cohesion: Because everyone works toward the organization's overall goal—however broad or abstract it might be—the characters don't diffuse their efforts. An elf paladin and a dwarf rogue might ordinarily not give each other the time of day, but if they're part of the same organization, they already have a connection they can build a friendship on. As your game grows with new players and new characters, you have an easy way to connect them to the existing PCs: They're part of the larger organization, not complete strangers.

It Immerses PCs in the Game World: Left to their own designs, some PCs drift across the surface of the world you create, never becoming truly involved in any of the societies, conflicts, and plots you have spun. For some styles of play, that's fine, but many D&D players like to feel like the struggles of the game world matter to their characters. A PC organization is a good way to "ground" the players in the setting, giving them a set of enemies and allies they can accept or rebel against.

It Makes a DM's Life Easier: Most PC organizations provide some sort of tangible benefits to their members—otherwise, what PC would want to join? A good organization provides benefits to the DM as well. If the PCs are loyal to an organization, the DM can get an adventure rolling quickly by having its leaders direct the PCs to take action against some threat. The organization can also provide a safe home (either literally or figuratively) where the players can recover between struggles and spend their downtime.

CONSTRUCTING A PC ORGANIZATION

Building an organization that the PCs will want to join is more art than science; there's no right or wrong way to do it. The three example organizations provided below share a common format, which contains elements you might want to add to your own organizations.

Entry Requirements: Unlike a prestige class, it's okay for an organization to admit low-level members. You don't need to refer to specific game mechanics at all if they aren't appropriate for an organization.

Benefits: The organization should provide some tangible benefit, unless you're completely sure that the players at your table will join it for entirely altruistic reasons. D&D is already replete with reward systems for PCs, so you don't need to give away big benefits. Focus instead on benefits that make your game run more smoothly.

For example, if an organization gives PCs easy and inexpensive access to a 9th-level NPC cleric, that makes your job easier. A PC who dies can get a *raise dead* spell quickly, minimizing the player's time away from the action at the game table. It's a tangible benefit to the players, but doesn't actively affect the PCs in everyday play.

Consider the following benefit categories.

Economics: You can make changes to the usual buying and selling rules by inventing an organization that pays

more than 50% value for certain items, or one that offers a discount on purchased items.

You can also create an organization that pays its members outright, but consider carefully how radically a D&D player's sense of wealth changes as the game reaches higher levels. A salary of 100 gp a month looks like a prince's ransom at 1st level, but amounts to a pittance at 15th level. If you want to have the organization pay the PCs, consider alternatives to salary. The organization might offer to cover adventuring expenses (such as expensive material components) or offer bonus-based pay (such as bounties). That way you maintain overall control of the D&D economy at your game table.

Gear: Some organizations provide equipment outright, such as magic items, horses, or a sailing ship. This category includes loaned gear, too. As with paying PCs outright, consider how the perceived value of the item changes as the characters attain more levels.

Services: The NPC members of an organization can do things for the PCs, such as cast spells on their behalf and make magic items with raw materials the characters provide them. Access to low-level laborers and hirelings falls into this category as well.

Information: Some organizations are useful for the things they can tell a character. Establish Knowledge check bonuses for the sages within an organization. Membership can also provide conveniences such as language translation, access to rare books and maps, and access to spellbooks for PC wizards. Clue-based magical divinations such as *contact other plane* are a powerful example of this resource, but giving PCs unlimited access to the power of prophecy can be a recipe for disaster if you aren't prepared for them to use it.

Access: Organizations can have interesting headquarters and other important locations, such as fortresses, planar gates, or forbidden islands. They might offer unusual means of transport, such as desert caravans and flying ships. Again, these benefits provide convenience for you as the DM—they get the PCs to the adventure sites faster.

Status: Finally, some organizations have an element of social status attached to them, whether within society at large (such as a noble order of knights) or a subculture (such as a thieves' guild).

If you tie a prestige class to the organization, you should require membership in the organization for any prospective member of the prestige class.

Combat: D&D adventures tend to involve combat, and the organizations that create those adventures are well aware of the dangers of the world they live in. Not all organizations feature combat as their main focus, of course, but all at least recognize the benefit of a strong defense. How an organization faces threats reinforces the nature of its mission and purpose.

Advancement: Decide how the organization recruits new members and what it feels like to undergo the process of joining. Then consider what ongoing membership is like, and what opportunities for advancement the PCs will have.

Missions: What sort of missions does the organization undertake? Are they tailored toward specific goals or meant to pursue general principles? Are characters assigned every tasks, or can they take their own initiative when pursuing the organization's goals? Missions can be as simple or as complex as you (and the needs of the organization) decree.

Responsibilities: Consider carefully what the minimum level of participation is for the PCs to stay in the organization. D&D players are fond of rushing off to save the world at a moment's notice, so you want to allow a certain degree of freedom in most organizations.

Structure: Decide who's in charge, and the agenda of the leadership. Then figure out what the subordinate leaders are like. Spend some time brainstorming about other notable members, such as the organization's founder, a particularly noteworthy hero, or a traitor whose name everyone curses. If your players like a political element to their game, develop factions and rivalries within the organization, or conflicts between one organization and another.

NPC Reactions: Figure out how the average "peasant in the street" reacts to the organization. Then consider how the various groups and factions important to your campaign might react differently. How important this element is depends greatly on whether the organization is public or secret.

Lore: If someone wants to learn more about the organization, what skill applies? What are the DCs to learn different details about a group? It is harder to learn about obscure or secret organizations than it is to learn about public organizations with storied histories.

Encounters: Figure out the features that lend themselves to a fun encounter with members of the organization, whether the PCs join the group or not. Create stats for the characters the PCs will interact with. This might be the leadership, or it might be the rank-and-file members, depending on the organization and the level of the PCs. It might be tempting to try to produce statistics for the entire organization, but you'll be better served by focusing your efforts on the NPCs that the characters are most likely to meet during a game session.

Adaptation: The three organizations presented below feature examples of how to modify them for use in your unique game world.

Other Game Elements: An organization can often be the inspiration for a location, magic item, feat, spell, or prestige class, if the organization has developed any of these things for its members.

ORDER OF ANCIENT MYSTERIES

"We are so proud of our grand cities, our far-flung empires, and our powerful magic. Yet in the dim past lie buried wonders that would stagger our feeble imaginations."

Urtenek Mauroch, researcher
for the Order of Ancient Mysteries

A shadowy group devoted to uncovering the lost lore of the past, the Order of Ancient Mysteries sends its members far and wide to explore ruins, brave their dangers, and return with wagonloads of long-buried treasures.

Joining the Order

The order knows how dangerous its work is, so it insists on a minimum level of competence among its agents for their own safety. The order takes pains to separate itself from mere tomb robbers—by motive if not by methods—so all members have at least a passing familiarity with ancient history.

Entry Requirements: Base Fortitude, Reflex, and Will saves +1; Knowledge (history) 1 rank.

The Order of Ancient Mysteries knows that all the safe, easily explored ruins have long been thoroughly picked over by historians and adventures. What remain are the dangerous, remote, and well-guarded sites, so the order recruits bodyguards, healers, and "access experts" to accompany the learned researchers. Thus, every class has a place within the order, from the fighter who battles the jungle natives, to the rogue who disarms the crypt-door trap, to the cleric who destroys a tomb's undead guardians.

Because the Order of Ancient Mysteries grew out of the merger of other esoteric societies and cabals, monks and wizards are particularly common within its ranks. The wizards' tendency to thirst for knowledge makes them good researchers, while the monks' strong self-discipline enables them to pursue the order's goals without distraction or fear.

An expedition of the Order of Ancient Mysteries looks a lot like a typical group of adventurers—and that's no accident. Whatever the PCs' class, they will find their versatility and special abilities put to the test by the many dangers of the ruins they explore.

PCs usually receive an invitation to join the Order of Ancient Mysteries after they have uncovered items of historical significance as part of their adventurers. If they sell the emerald-encrusted ankh they found in a mummy's tomb, for example, the PCs might meet an agent of the order as the buyer. That buyer will then start a conversation, which in turn might eventually lead to an invitation to join the Order of Ancient Mysteries.

More rarely, the order approaches adventurers in a patronage role, offering them the opportunity to explore a particular site in exchange for a cut of the profits. The order has plenty of its own agents, however, so it only uses freelance help if order members are otherwise occupied, or if the freelancers have unique abilities or access to the site in question.

In any case, the order prides itself on its ability to match expedition members to the potential dangers of a site. When characters first join the order, they undergo a series of physical, mental, and magical tests so that the order has some idea of their capabilities. They are then sent off to a ruin, dungeon, or other site believed to have minor historical significance. The more historical lore and valuable treasure the characters bring back to the order, the more lucrative—and dangerous—their next assignment will be.

ORDER OF ANCIENT MYSTERIES BENEFITS

The Order of Ancient Mysteries has been delving into tombs, temples, and ruins for centuries, so it can afford to be picky about what it takes from an expedition. Accordingly, as members, PCs can keep almost all the treasure they extract from a site. The order wants only specific items of historical significance, many of which have little or no intrinsic value. The order sustains itself as a peerless broker of historical information and a dealer in rare antiquities, so it can afford to leave the garden-variety loot in the hands of its explorers. Not surprisingly, the promise of riches motivates those explorers to risk life and limb on the next expedition.

Economics: The Order of Ancient Mysteries finds itself in possession of many antiquities that, once studied, are of no further use to the researchers. While an ancient magic sword doesn't do any good to the order historian in her office, it's definitely useful to the order's explorers.

As an agent of the order, a character can purchase magic weapons, armor, rings, rods, and wondrous items for 80% of their listed market price. Doing so is time-consuming, however, and even the order's vaults don't contain every magic item under the sun. If a PC is interested in obtaining a specific magic item from the order, he must wait two weeks while his request works its way through the order's various branches. The item might be available (30% chance), with a further 30% chance that a similar item is available.

Taken collectively, the Order of Ancient Mysteries' branches have a gold piece limit of 70,000 gp (as if the order was a community between a large city and a metropolis in size; see page 137 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Gear: The flip side of keeping the bulk of the loot from its explorations is that the order expects the PCs to be self-sufficient explorers. The order doesn't equip adventurers, but it will provide logistical assistance and transport for particularly large or unusual expeditions.

For example, if the order tasks the characters with recovering the three pieces of the Colossus of Korvenon (a 40-foot-tall statue), it will provide the train of wagons required to transport the pieces back to civilization. Protecting the wagon train is still the PCs' responsibility, however.

Services: The order's research directors are accustomed to setting up expeditions, so they often acquire hirelings such as porters, teamsters, translators, and guides for a group of explorers. The order usually pays the hirelings, although PCs would be wise to offer them a small percentage of the expedition's proceeds as well.

Information: First and foremost, the Order of Ancient Mysteries can provide the location of sites for characters to explore. The order's collection of ancient maps is without equal, and is constantly being updated and improved by explorers. A typical adventure for the order begins with a research planner telling the PCs something like, "Recent research has revealed the existence of a temple/ruin/crypt/fortress in (insert remote location here)." They immediately receive whatever information the order has on the site, such as maps, potential dangers, historical details, and nearby hazards. That's not to say that the order's information is completely accurate or complete—if it were, the PCs might not need to go there in the first place.

It's not as exciting as a map to a lost temple, but the historical information in the order's archives can be a useful resource. Within the order's facilities, members have free access to a researcher with a Knowledge (history) modifier of +15 or Knowledge (any other category) +10. Given two weeks' time, a more learned sage (+20 in history and +15 in other categories) can respond to written requests.

Access: As members of the Order of Ancient Mysteries, PCs have access to the order's public facilities: unassuming buildings in most large cities and metropolises. The order's regional headquarters are often near a city's university, temple to Boccob, or some other center of learning. Few antiquities are kept long-term at the various headquarters, so the order relies on armed guards and the occasional magic ward for protection.

At the regional headquarters, characters can meet with research planners who provide them with new sites to explore, get help with logistical matters such as hiring porters, and deliver the antiquities when the expedition is over. Only order members make it past the headquarters' entry hall—not everyone is worthy to gaze on the accumulated lore of the past.

The order also maintains secure vaults where it keeps its accumulated antiquities—especially those it hopes will reward further study. The order's vaults are almost always in remote locations and bristle with both magical and mundane defenses. Many vaults were once sites of historical significance that the order fully explored and then appropriated for its own storage purposes. The order's explorers rarely receive access to the vaults, the locations of which are a secret known only to the higher echelons of researchers.

PLAYING A MEMBER OF THE ORDER

Many things can drive characters to explore: knowledge for its own sake, the challenge of remote locations and exotic dangers, or the thrill of the "big score" when they uncover a treasure chamber full of gold. Whatever the reason, adventurers are driven to climb down into dark, dangerous places, delving into sites that haven't been touched for centuries or millennia.

Explorers and the Order of Ancient Mysteries thus have a symbiotic relationship. The order periodically gives PCs new places to explore, and they bring back lore and antiquities that further the order's research efforts—which in turn lead to new places for the heroes to discover. While there's little crossover between the order's researchers and its explorers, both groups are keenly aware of how necessary the other group's skills and abilities are to the order's goals.

Combat: The order's explorers fight only when they have to—but when their business is invading ancient ruins, tombs, and temples, they find themselves fighting quite a bit.

When possible, explorers employ stealth or magic to reach an exploration site, especially if the mundane

TEN ORDER-SPONSORED EXPEDITIONS

- Retrieve the shards of Glazarel's burial urn from the Tombs of the Wailing Priests.
- Copy the inscriptions from the summoning circle at the Ebony Tower, but do not disturb the demon lord trapped within the circle.
- Follow the strange comet until it lands and reveals the Temple Beyond Time.
- Map the Shrine of the Dark Journey, which lies deep beneath the surface and is overrun with kuo-toas.
- Acquire by any means the ruby chalices of Kavannu from the blue dragon Arphenastrom.
- Burn incense on the Altar of Doom until the Portal to Pandemonium appears, then map the caverns beyond. Don't stay beyond the 12 hours that the portal remains open.
- Retrieve a mummy lord from the ziggurat of Thanak-Re—without destroying it.
- Figure out the origin point of the magical cataclysm that destroyed the city of Illuria.
- Find out what happened to the 9th-degree explorer Nerachem, who sailed north to find a mysterious iceberg city.
- Sack the library of the lich known only as Fell Guriak.

alternative is a month-long trek through hostile jungle. If the site can't be reached with magic, they must contend with the beasts, bandits, and other dangerous creatures that live near the area.

Once in the site, characters have to contend with myriad traps left by the location's last occupants, plus any guardians left behind. Often these guardians are ageless creatures, such as undead and constructs. Sometimes they have to fight their way through a site's more recent denizens to get to items of historical significance. If PCs want to reach the thousand-year-old Temple of the Twin Suns, their real opposition might be a tribe of kuo-toas that moved into the temple a decade ago and now call it home.

Advancement: The order's explorers can advance in rank through a tiered system known in order parlance as "degrees." Characters are known as initiate explorers until they successfully complete an expedition for the order. After that point, they are explorers of the first degree.

Thereafter, characters are promoted a degree each time they bring back items of historical significance; each trip, the order's researchers raise the threshold of what constitutes "significance." For lower degrees, bringing back samples of ancient arts or clues about age-old civilizations might be sufficient. As PCs attain greater degrees, it takes more to impress the researchers—complete religious texts, functioning magic items, or maps to previously unknown sites.

Degrees are awarded based on an expedition's historical significance, not its danger. While the two factors are often related, it's possible to face great dangers and come home empty-handed, or to luck into a great historical find at minimal risk. Thus the explorers of the order rarely refer to their degrees when talking to each other. Degrees are mostly a ranking system used by the researchers and expedition planners.

Some expedition planners offer particular missions only to explorers who have reached a certain degree—often the fifth degree or the tenth degree. Those expeditions often target fragile sites—those the order worries it might have only one chance to explore. A temple perched on the lip of a volcano, a ruined city that appears on the Material Plane for only one week each century, or an ancient tomb in the center of an active battlefield—all are examples of areas that only the order's best operatives will be asked to explore.

Missions: At heart, the order's expeditions are simple: An expedition planner gives the characters a map and instructions. They then brave the dangers of the site and return with treasure for themselves and antiquities for the order's researchers.

Sometimes the order throws a wrinkle into a particular mission. For example, the PCs might be sent to scout a particularly large site, such as a ruined city, identifying its major buildings and assessing its greatest dangers. They need bring back only information: a map, a catalog of the ruined city's denizens, and a copy of the runes etched on the city's walls, for example. Future expeditions—perhaps led by the PCs, perhaps not—will tackle the various buildings within the city separately.

Sometimes the order's explorers get lost or simply never return from an expedition. Characters might be sent to a site not to gather antiquities but to rescue the survivors of a previous expedition or at least ascertain their fate.

Responsibilities: The Order of Ancient Mysteries realizes that expeditions might take months to complete, and it acknowledges that some explorers take on jobs and missions that don't have anything to do with the order. As long as the PCs perform one expedition per year and don't catastrophically fail a mission, they remain members in good standing.

THE ORDER IN THE WORLD

"Begone, interlopers! The horrors buried here have no place in your unsuspecting world!"

Al-Yuriak the lich, to the order expedition that opened his tomb

The Order of Ancient Mysteries is an organization designed to support episodic D&D play. Each episode is a site-based adventure that begins with a briefing from the order, proceeds to actual exploration of the site, and concludes with a return to civilization.

It's up to you, as the DM, to determine how tightly you want the episodes to link together. If you opt for few or no connections between episodes, you have a great degree of freedom to design varied sites to explore: a lich's tomb one month, a sahuagin temple the next, and a ruined githzerai monastery on the Plane of Limbo after that. If you connect the episodes, you can have each site reveal historical information that leads to the next site, and eventually the characters' experience with one site might help them survive a later one.

Structure: The Order of Ancient Mysteries is composed of three distinct groups. The research directors set the order's overall agenda, control its financial resources, and prioritize its research efforts. They approve the exploration of each new site and assign explorers to each expedition.

The explorers accomplish much of the order's actual work. They explore the sites, deal with the dangers and hazards there, then return historical antiquities to the order. PCs will almost always be explorers. While explorers are central to the order's mission, they're usually off on expeditions, so they don't have much say in the order's internal politics or overall decision making.

The researchers are the connection between the explorers and the research directors. Academic sages pore over

the antiquities and lore that the explorers recover. Once their research uncovers information about a new site, they pass along their data to the research directors, who decide whether it merits a new expedition.

NPC Reactions

Most people simply aren't interested in history, so they have an initial attitude of indifferent to members of the Order of Ancient Mysteries. The typical NPC thinks of researchers and research directors as specialized sages. The order's explorers are treated like travelers and explorers the world over. Other historians, clerics of Boccob, and collegians at schools of wizardry regard members of the order more favorably, with a starting attitude of friendly.

That's not to say that the order is without rivals and enemies. Two adversaries deserve special note.

The half-elf Baron Iriyach runs a far-flung tomb robbing and smuggling network, and he's eager to beat the Order of Ancient Mysteries to any potential site. He attempts to do so in three ways: by infiltrating order branches and stealing maps and lore, by preempting or waylaying explorers en route to a lucrative site, and by discovering and breaking into the order's antiquities vaults to steal the treasure within.

Another enemy represents one of the extinct societies that the order now studies. The Hakralian Empire fragmented centuries ago, but many of their tombs and temples remain. The Hakralians were obsessed with death and the afterlife, and they used divination magic to discern that the Order of Ancient Mysteries would one day plunder their gravesites and other sacred places. Accordingly, they created a cabal of agents (some undead, others in suspended animation) known as the Guardians of the Coming Dawn to thwart the order and protect the contents of Hakralian vaults. A central Hakralian prophecy predicts the rebirth of the empire—an event the Guardians worry the order's site-plundering might disrupt.

ORDER OF ANCIENT MYSTERIES LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (history) can research the Order of Ancient Mysteries to learn more about the organization.

DC 10: The Order of Ancient Mysteries sends expeditions to sites of historical interest and has them bring back antiquities.

DC 15: Among historians, the order is known for the quality of its research and its tendency to take everything from an ancient ruin that isn't nailed down.

DC 20: Becoming one of the order's explorers is a good way to get rich, but it's dangerous. The explorers get to keep whatever treasure they find that the researchers don't want.

DC 30: Baron Iriyach, an antiquities dealer of some repute, will pay handsomely for information on the order's current or future expeditions.

THE ORDER IN YOUR GAME

The Order of Ancient Mysteries makes an excellent patron for mid-level PCs, who are either hired by an order explorer or assigned a small expedition of their own. If the initial expedition goes well, the PCs are probably asked to join the organization at that point. You now have a ready-made adventure starter whenever you need one—a research planner from the order shows up with a map.

Because the order largely keeps to itself, it's easy to mix adventures involving the order with adventures that don't involve searching a ruin for ancient treasures. In your game, you can thrust the order into a struggle between other powers and factions by having the PCs uncover some long-buried secret with larger implications for your game world. If the order winds up with part of a powerful artifact or the instructions for a doomsday ritual, the organization will draw decidedly nonacademic interest from other powerful creatures and organizations.

If the PCs in your game have joined the order, they should expect to encounter tombs full of deadly traps, mouldering temples housing strange magic, and ancient ruins that aren't as deserted as they seem. Give them all the tropes of the exploration genre: cowardly or traitorous guides, hostile natives, unscrupulous rivals, wondrous sights unbeheld by mortal eyes, and narrow escapes from certain doom.

Encounters: Most members of the order are encountered as patrons. A research planner from the order will hire the PCs to undertake an expedition to a historical site and bring back some antiquities.

Under the right circumstances, the order can make a useful ally—or rival. If the PCs are exploring a site on their own and get trapped or captured somehow, an explorer from the order might rescue them as she explores the site. The PCs might be adventuring in a dungeon and find that an order expedition keeps beating them to the most interesting and lucrative areas.

Adaptation: As presented, the order is a self-sufficient, independent group. In your campaign, it might be affiliated with a church, government, or other organization. The order might be one college in a magical university, or it might be the pet project of a history-obsessed king.

Another way to adapt the order for your campaign is to give it a more tangible goal than the abstract "uncover all the lost secrets of history." Perhaps it's the Order of *the* Ancient Mystery—a group devoted to solving an immense magical puzzle that's confounded sages for centuries. The order might want to unearth every ruin of a particular era or empire because it seeks something specific, or because it's obsessed with returning the world to the splendors of a bygone age.

THE SHINING CRUSADE

"We have all grown weary of manning the barricades, waiting for the next undead army or demon horde. Instead, we're taking the fight to the enemy."

Athurax, Crusader Captain

A militant arm of good-aligned churches and governments, the Shining Crusade attacks the forces of evil—especially fiends and undead—wherever they can be found.

JOINING THE SHINING CRUSADE

Membership in the Shining Crusade is generally granted as a reward to soldiers and adventurers who show heroism in battle against the forces of evil or thwart a fiendish or undead plot. If the PCs vanquish evil in a manner that gets the attention of good-aligned governments or churches, they might receive an invitation to join the Shining Crusade. Where the crusade is popular, members enjoy a degree of honored social status, not unlike that accorded to a decorated war veteran.

While many members of the Shining Crusades are paladins, the stereotypical "knights in shining armor," the organization knows the value of fighting evil from the shadows as well. Thus, the Shining Crusade counts members of every class and race within its ranks.

Entry Requirements: Nonevil alignment, base attack bonus +2, must have publicly thwarted a major plot from undead, demons, or devils.

Overall, a third of the Shining Crusade consists of paladins, and another third are neutral good and chaotic good clerics, fighters, and rangers. The remaining third are members of other classes—former mercenaries, ne'er-do-wells, and adventurers who have taken up the banner of the Shining Crusade.

Initial training for new Shining Crusade members is minimal. New crusaders learn about the organization's history, the tenets of the crusaders' code, and various passwords and means of communicating with the crusade's leadership. In the likely event that a group qualifies to join the Shining Crusade together, the organization encourages that group to continue operating as a team. Training usually ends when characters stride forth on their first mission as shining crusaders.

SHINING CRUSADE BENEFITS

Because its mission is so broad—defeat the forces of evil anywhere they gather—the Shining Crusade often finds itself spread thin. The combat forces of the crusade typically fight major battles in a dozen places or more at any one time. Only when the need is dire will characters be able to call on the full military might of the Shining Crusade.

Economics: The Shining Crusade relies on its crusaders to equip themselves, but it does have a number of clerics willing to add the undead bane and evil outsider bane special abilities to magic weapons for 75% of the usual cost.

Gear: Anywhere the Shining Crusade has a fortress (usually 50% of small cities, and all large cities and metropolises), crusaders on a mission can get warhorses and nonmagical equipment from the fortress's arsenal. As long as characters don't obviously abuse this privilege, they needn't return the gear when they're done with it.

One item of gear deserves special note: the crusader's tabard. Because crusaders come from dozens of religions and scores of races and nations, the Shining Crusade has adopted a simple tabard as its insignia, rather than a holy symbol or heraldic design on a shield. On their tabard or robe, crusaders wear an emblem in the form of a radiating sun pattern.

Traditionally, the sun emblem is gold on a blue tabard, but individual crusaders often adopt different colors. Some choose national or religious colors to emphasize their heritage or dual affiliation. Others do so for practicality's sake; stealthy rogues in service of the Shining Crusade wear a black sun on a midnight-blue tabard.

Services: A typical Shining Crusade fortress has a 9th-level cleric on hand to cast spells on its members' behalf, asking only for the relevant material components in exchange for the spellcasting. Spells that crusaders often ask for (and the cleric often has prepared) include *break enchantment*, *restoration*, *remove blindness/deafness*, *remove curse*, *remove disease*, and *lesser restoration*. If PCs want *divination*, *atonement*, or *raise dead*, they will have to wait a day for the cleric to prepare them.

Once characters reach the upper echelons of the Shining Crusade (around 10th level, if they've spent most of their time successfully completing missions for the crusade), they receive a greater benefit: a headquarters for their group to call its own.

THE CRUSADERS' CODE

Members of the Shining Crusade are expected to adhere to the following code. It's intentionally less restrictive than the paladin's code; paladins who are shining crusaders are expected to obey the stricter rules.

- Suffer not the undead to live, nor fiends of any sort. Do not negotiate with them under any circumstance.
- Other evildoers will face justice in the afterlife. Do not hasten their journey there unless they use lethal force against you first.
- When innocents are at peril, rescue them before slaying undead and fiends, unless a delay or distraction would put even more innocents at peril.
- Hack at the root of evil, not its branches. Better yet, crush the seed and sow the earth with salt.

A 15th-level cleric armed with multiple *move earth, wall of stone, stone shape,* and similar spells builds the characters a base of operations, assisted by a team of low-level stonemasons, carpenters, and other craftspeople. The PCs choose the site and consult with the cleric ahead of time to make sure the finished product meets their needs. Construction typically takes a month, although any special requests the PCs make might lengthen this time. The crusade's cleric won't construct an entire keep on their behalf, but a sturdy tower is certainly within bounds, as are a series of linked dungeon rooms. The PC group can augment the cleric's efforts with their own spellcasting, if they like.

When the crusade's cleric is done building the new headquarters, a 17th-level wizard arrives briefly to create a permanent set of *teleportation circles* linking the headquarters to the nearest Shining Crusade fortress.

Information: While individual members of the Shining Crusade are quite knowledgeable, the organization doesn't keep its own libraries or other information stores. The crusade is always at war, so even its internal record-keeping is spotty.

Access: Characters can always find clean but spartan accommodations at a Shining Crusade fortress, and wearing the tabard of the Shining Crusade is often sufficient to grant them an audience with the ranking clerics at temples of good-aligned deities, such as St. Cuthbert, Heironeous, and Pelor.

Status: Crusaders in good standing gain a +2 circumstance bonus on interactions with mid- to high-level clerics in good-aligned churches and with the political leaders of nations beset by undead or fiendish attacks.

PLAYING A SHINING CRUSADER

Members of the Shining Crusade tend to be aggressive—the whole point of the crusade is to attack evil before it takes root and spreads. That doesn't mean they heedlessly charge into battle with every demon they see. If an undead or fiendish foe is simply too strong for a group to handle, there's no shame in retreating, warning nearby noncombatants, and asking the crusade leadership for aid.

While the Shining Crusade leadership isn't always able to respond to every fiendish incursion or undead machination, it makes every effort to send the right force against the right enemy. It generally lacks the resources to send overwhelming force against a foe, but it won't order PCs to defeat a flight of rampaging balors unless they have demonstrated that they're up to the task. Communication between a PC group and the crusade leadership is thus a two-way street: The characters tell the crusade about threats as they uncover them, especially if they're too great for the PCs to handle themselves, and the crusade points them toward new sources of evil that must be expunged.

Combat: Most crusaders know their foes quite well, and they're armed for the task. The Shining Crusade's clerics are adept at turning undead, and arcane spellcasters have spells such as *dismissal* and *banishment* ready for evil outsiders they find on the Material Plane. Nonspellcasters often carry holy or bane weapons. Rogues in particular are fond of magic weapons with the undead bane special ability, because it helps make up for the fact that they can't sneak attack undead foes.

Crusaders in combat are also mindful of the crusaders' code (see the sidebar), which bids them show no mercy to evil outsiders and undead, but forbids them from using lethal force on other enemies—no matter how evil—unless those enemies use lethal force first. Early in a fight, members of the Shining Crusade focus their efforts on undead and evil outsiders until the cultists, mad necromancers, and other evildoers nearby make their intentions clear.

When any member uncovers regional or global threats, such as an undead army on the march or a massive open portal to the Abyss, the Shining Crusade goes to war with all the might of a small nation. When it gathers all its resources together, the Shining Crusade can call on thousands of troops, many of whom are mid- to high-level paladins and other battle-ready characters. Such great crusades typically happen only once every five years or so, but the Shining Crusade responds whenever the need is great.

Advancement: The Shining Crusade has no formal system of ranks, relying instead on an almost feudal system of patronage. When characters first join the Shining Crusade, their efforts will be guided by a mid- to high-level crusader, who in turn reports to a more powerful superior, and so on. As they attain more levels, slay more evildoers, and do the good work of the Shining Crusade, they are "handed off" to higher and higher echelons of the crusade's leadership and given missions of greater importance. Eventually PCs might take a leadership position within the crusade, directing its efforts to stamp out evil everywhere.

Missions: Shining Crusade missions are archetypal D&D fare: destroy the lich wizard, unmask the secret cultists, and destroy the gate to the Nine Hells, for example. As long as a villain employs demons, devils, or undead to work evil in the world, characters are likely to be sent into battle on behalf of the Shining Crusade.

The Shining Crusade particularly favors missions where it has the strategic initiative. Its members would much rather attack the lich-king's stronghold than defend the city gates against a horde of flesh-starved ghouls. The crusaders won't pass up the opportunity to defend innocents against evil depredations, of course, but they emphasize taking the attack to the enemy. High-level crusaders, for example, travel to the Abyss and the Nine Hells to attack

fiendish fortresses and slay archfiends. Their low-level counterparts watch for signs of malevolent influence on the Material Plane, then stamp it out preemptively if they can.

Responsibilities: The Shining Crusade expects its members to live as crusaders, battling evil whenever possible. The crusade leadership recognizes that the tides of evil ebb and flow. The organization is also too busy watching evildoers to keep close track of every group of crusaders.

As long PCs adhere to the crusader's code and are generally available for crusade missions, they remain members in good standing. Unless a global threat arises, they can take as much time off as they need to construct magic items and perform side missions that involve other evil foes. If characters have a string of successes under their belt, the Shining Crusade will look the other way at side missions that don't involve evildoers or are primarily efforts at self-enrichment.

THE SHINING CRUSADE IN THE WORLD

"The entrance guards are missing? Ropes leading up the tower walls? Sound the alarm and make ready my armor—the Shining Crusade has found us."

Choronak, hamatula general

The Shining Crusade is designed as an adventure enabler. It offers missions to the PCs to get matters started and provides noncombatant assistance such as spellcasting that enables hurt or killed PCs to return to the fray. If the PCs are captured or trapped, their fellow crusaders can be the figurative (or even literal) cavalry that rides to their rescue.

Structure: The Shining Crusade is a sprawling organization that relies on the competence and good graces of its individual members; it has only as much internal structure as it needs to get its mission done. No single leader or council sets the crusade's direction—just a handful of powerful characters trying to preempt the forces of darkness as best they can. The simplicity of the crusade's mandate—attack evil outsiders and undead—is the only reason that different wings of the crusade don't get in each other's way. Outright rivalries among the leadership are rare, but frequently one part of the Shining Crusade doesn't know what the others are doing.

Crusaders tend to operate in small, mixed groups not unlike adventuring parties. At first, they plan missions from within the crusade's fortresses near major cities. Eventually, elite crusaders receive private headquarters of their own. In either case, most members are out crusading against evil at any given time, not acting as a garrison for the fortress.

The Shining Crusade began centuries ago when Aryesha (a human cleric of Pelor), Rurithane (an elf paladin of Corellon Larethian), and Athrau Stonegallow (one of Moradin's dwarven defenders) defeated a lich-king that had usurped the throne of a mighty kingdom and nearly conquered an entire continent. The trio, chastened by their failure to defeat the lich before its power grew, vowed never again to let evil lurk in the darkness and grow in strength. Calling themselves the Shining Crusade, they urged like-minded heroes to carry their banner and began training a new generation of crusaders. Aryesha and Athrau have passed on to the afterlife, but Rurithane remains an influential member of the Shining Crusade. Rurithane rarely contacts the other high-level members of the Shining Crusade's leadership, but his counsel is accorded great weight when he does.

With Rurithane often absent and Aryesha and Athrau gone, national governments and organized good-aligned religions have the strongest influence on the Shining Crusade's leaders, because those churches and governments fund the crusade from their own treasuries. The Shining Crusade relies on enough different funding sources that no one government or church can convince the crusade's leaders to change the direction of its mission. Highly lawful and highly chaotic churches sometimes withdraw their support of the Shining Crusade, but they usually come back into the fold once the crusade deals a particularly telling blow to the forces of evil.

NPC Reactions

Anywhere the Shining Crusade goes, it carries the thanks of the countless innocent lives the organization has saved by striking at the roots of evil. Because the Shining Crusade specializes in preemptive strikes and battles on enemy ground, those innocent lives often don't know how threatened they were, and they don't see the Shining Crusade's work firsthand.

Accordingly, most NPCs have an initial attitude of indifferent toward the Shining Crusade. The officials of good-aligned churches have a starting attitude of friendly toward crusaders, and undead and outsiders have a starting attitude of hostile toward anyone wearing the Shining Crusade's tabard if they know that the tabard signifies an imminent fight to the death.

The Shining Crusade's enemies are many: all demons, devils, and undead, plus most other evil organizations, evil gods, and their worshipers. Two enemies deserve particular notice.

The crusade often finds itself in conflict with followers of Wee Jas. Wee Jas isn't evil, and many of her followers are likewise neutral or even good. But the Witch Goddess's followers often consort with the undead and so draw the Shining Crusade's ire. Some within the Shining Crusade would like to attack the church of Wee Jas directly, but to do so would violate the crusaders' code. Particularly committed crusaders chafe at the restriction, wishing

they could strike at Wee Jas's temples before they train the next generation of necromancers.

A group of cultists and devils affiliated with the archdevil Dispater are trying to defeat the Shining Crusade with subterfuge and trickery, not fell might. They have attempted numerous times to place long-term agents among the membership of the Shining Crusade. While the crusade's leadership has caught devilish spies and traitors, they wonder whether other "moles" remain within the crusade. Dispater's followers also trap strongholds, designing them to catch crusaders eager to preempt an evildoer's plot. Crusaders are lured to these sites using false hints of evil plots in the hopes of turning the strongholds into Dispater's killing grounds.

SHINING CRUSADE LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (religion) or Knowledge (the planes) can research the Shining Crusade to learn more about the organization.

DC 10: The Shining Crusade is a militant order, mostly composed of paladins, devoted to wiping out evil.

DC 15: The crusade focuses on defeating demons, devils, and undead.

DC 20: Whenever possible, the Shining Crusade attacks fiends and undead in their own lairs, before their evil plots have come to fruition. The doctrine of preemption is what separates this group from countless other knightly orders.

DC 30: Recently the Shining Crusade has fallen victim to several traps laid by the archdevil Dispater.

THE SHINING CRUSADE IN YOUR GAME

The Shining Crusade works best when you introduce it into your game gradually. Low-level characters might meet a duke wearing a tabard from his days with the Shining Crusade. They might ride past one of the crusade's fortresses on their way elsewhere. Such brief mentions plant the seeds for a more robust introduction later on in your campaign.

In most ongoing games, PCs achieve a victory of at least regional importance by 5th level or so. Maybe they rescue the town from a gnoll attack or clean out the haunted caverns that threaten nearby caravan routes. At that point, they attract the attention of a high-level Shining Crusade member, who gives them a mission against fiends or undead, with membership in the crusade as the reward for success.

As your players approach the point where the Crusade will build them a headquarters, encourage them to take an active hand in its design. Don't give them an entire castle, but give them a cool lair where they can retreat in safety and spend their downtime, and that they can customize as they see fit.

When you have a table full of crusaders ready for action, make sure your adventures have a degree of variety. Because the crusade focuses on fiendish and undead opponents, you run the risk of falling into a rut and offering the same opponents in adventure after adventure. Make sure that you use templates, class levels, and the full panoply of fiends and undead to ensure that the PCs don't become bored with the opposition—or take their evil enemies for granted.

Encounters: When most PCs encounter the Shining Crusade, it'll be as allies. (If the PCs are affiliated with demons, devils, or undead, the Shining Crusade make tenacious opponents, however.) When the PCs first meet members of the Shining Crusade, emphasize the crusaders' zeal for attacking evil and their sense of fair play with mortals. If the PCs spend any time with the crusaders, they also get a sense of the Shining Crusade's doctrine of preemption and what it takes to join the crusade.

Adaptation: The Shining Crusade intentionally encompasses all good-aligned races and religions, so it's appropriate for the widest variety of D&D groups. You have only one D&D group in your campaign, though, so you can narrow the focus if you like. Perhaps only humans and elves join the Shining Crusade, or maybe the crusade is the militant arm of the church of Pelor. As long as the crusade doesn't keep out good-aligned players that want in, you can ground it in a specific faith or nation.

Another way to adapt the Shining Crusade is to change its mandate. You can narrow it (a Shining Crusade that battles only demon hordes), refocus it (a Shining Crusade devoted to ridding the underdark of mind flayers and drow), or even obscure it (a Shining Crusade for whom the antifiend, antiundead crusade is just a means to a specific end).

RED KNIVES THIEVES' GANG

"Obey the gang, and you'll see gold. Cross the gang, and you'll see red."

Street aphorism common among Red Knives guild members

The gang of thieves known as the Red Knives can make anyone disappear—voluntarily or involuntarily. It can spring a prisoner from the baron's dungeon. It can tell bandits when the silk caravan is due to arrive. It can do all these things and more—for loyal members of the gang.

JOINING THE RED KNIVES THIEVES' GANG

Not every rogue is a thief, and not every thief is a rogue. Regardless of a character's class, the Red Knives look for earners—criminals to help fill the gang's coffers. The guild leaders let nearly anyone join the gang as long as they see earning potential in the applicant's illicit activities.

The gang is always on the watch for potential traitors and stool pigeons. Each new member must go through an initiation that includes illegal activity (often an assault, robbery, or major burglary). The gang bosses keep evidence of the applicants' guilt, which they use as leverage and insurance against future disloyalty.

Entry Requirements: Must pass questioning under *zone of truth*; must successfully complete initiation crime.

More than two-thirds of the Red Knives have at least one level of rogue, but every class (except paladin, obviously) has a place in the gang. Bards use entertainment as a cover for more illicit activities, and sorcerers and wizards use arcane magic as a cover for theirs. Barbarians, fighters, and rangers serve as muscle for protection rackets. Clerics heal wounded bandits and magically enhance the abilities of fellow gang members.

Druids and monks are rare in the gang. Druids might use networks of rats, crows, or other urban animals to spy for the gang. A sense of personal honor could lead a monk to act as bodyguard or trainer for a gang boss.

After joining the gang, PCs meet at least two superiors: the master of whatever illicit activity they specialize in (Master of Burglars, Master of Robbers, and so on) and the boss responsible for coordinating gang activity in a particular neighborhood. They then receive approval for their first caper, which is done under gang surveillance to make sure nothing goes awry.

Some would-be thieves seek out the Red Knives, but others make their acquaintance under less polite circumstances. Cutpurses, burglars, and other petty thieves experience their first contact with the gang early in their career—when they meet a gang enforcer in an alley. The enforcer explains to them the benefits of membership and threatens the consequences of spurning the gang. If the criminals don't join right away, they wind up under gang surveillance. Then they are visited repeatedly by gang enforcers, who escalate the threats and violence each time until they succeed at the recruiting efforts, kill the stubborn thieves, or drive them out of town.

RED KNIVES BENEFITS

The Red Knives Thieves' Gang does more for its elite members than for the rank and file. In some ways, the gang is a racket, with experienced thieves stealing from the proceeds of less powerful counterparts.

Economics: Its fencing operation is one of the biggest sources of income for the Red Knives. All the city's burglars sell their stolen goods to the gang, which then works them back into circulation through a network of shady but technically legal businesses.

Because the gang has a virtual monopoly on trade in stolen items, it can afford to take a smaller percentage cut from its members and make up the difference in volume. When characters sell stolen goods to the Red Knives, they get 60% of its market price, rather than the usual 50%.

When characters steal gold or other items that don't need to be fenced, however, it's a different story. Street muggers, for example, are expected to give 20% of their nightly take to the gang. Because they're criminals, most muggers cheat the Red Knives a little, but any mugger who isn't turning over at least 10% draws the attention of gang enforcers.

Services: Gang resources include experts in forgery, appraisal, magic item identification, alchemy, disguise, locksmithing, trapmaking (or trap disabling), and interrogation. With a word to the local gang boss, PCs can get access to an expert with a relevant skill modifier of +15 within hours. Experts with modifiers of +20 or higher are also available, but it might take days for the request to work its way through the entire Red Knives network.

Characters are expected to pay for these services, negotiating with the expert involved. The gang merely provides easy access to specialists who might otherwise be hard to find.

Information: Checking with the neighborhood boss is functionally the equivalent of having the boss make a Gather Information check on the PCs' behalf. A typical neighborhood boss has a Gather Information modifier of +10. Asking a question of the neighborhood boss isn't

RULES OF THE RED KNIVES

Each neighborhood boss and grandmaster is responsible for discipline among gang members. A set of unwritten rules exists to keep the gang running smoothly. Bosses often change or add to the rules according to the situation on the streets or for darker reasons of their own.

- Never rat out another Red Knife.
- Don't pull a job at any of the trade guild chapterhouses. They pay a lot of protection money. Anything outside the guildhall walls is fair game.
- Many of the temples are off limits too, depending on whether they pay the guild off. Check with the Temple District boss for the current lowdown.
- Give the gang its cut by dawn, or else.
- Don't kill city guards or soldiers of the garrison. Hurting them real bad is acceptable, though.
- If you see a freelancer, tell the neighborhood boss right away.
- Nobody sees you go into the storm sewers, and nobody sees you come out.
- If you don't check with the neighborhood boss and the grandmaster before you do a job, you forfeit the entire haul—and maybe a finger, if you screwed up somebody else's job.
- If two Red Knives eye the same loot, it's first come, first grabbed.

necessarily any faster than the PCs making their own queries, because the neighborhood boss will often say, "I'll ask around" and have an answer in 1d4+1 hours.

Access: Low-level gang members learn a series of passwords to identify other gang members working in the same neighborhood, and they receive a skeleton key that opens most city storm sewer grates (a common way for gang members to get around).

High-level members who have been with the gang for at least a year also learn the passwords and secret doors that lead to the gang's central headquarters in the catacombs under the city's temple district.

PLAYING A RED KNIVES MEMBER

Most members of the Red Knives are in the gang for the money, and the PCs might be no exception. Perhaps they regard gang membership as a way to strike back at the city's tyrannical rulers. Perhaps they have a Robin Hood mentality, stealing from the city's wealthy to support the impoverished.

Regardless of the reasons for joining the Red Knives, it takes continual work to make sure the relationship with fellow gang members is solid. Thieves are a distrustful lot, and periodic demonstrations of loyalty and competence are the only ways to ease that distrust. On the other hand, characters have to decide which of their fellow thieves are worthy of their trust, and that isn't any easier.

Combat: The Red Knives are primarily thieves, not assassins. They know firsthand that a bloody trail of bodies is an easy path for the city guard to follow. When possible, they strike quickly to put their opponents off balance, then flee into the shadows with their ill-gotten gains.

The Red Knives reserve their most cold-hearted violence for when they want to send a message. The gang's protection rackets can be heartlessly violent when they're trying to persuade reluctant victims. Freelance thieves who repeatedly refuse to join the Red Knives or surrender the gang's percentage find themselves on the receiving end of violence that borders on the sadistic.

Advancement: Among the rank and file, the Red Knives Thieves' Gang is a meritocracy. If a PC group pulls off successful heists and gets a reputation as an earner, the characters receive better leads on potential targets and better treatment from their superiors.

Advancing through the gang's leadership is harder. The neighborhood bosses and grandmasters are entrenched in their positions, and the only way to rise up through the gang is to knock someone else down. Rivalries among the leadership can be intense, although the gang's Grandmaster of Thieves quashes destructive vendettas within the organization.

Missions: As gang members, characters are free to plan their own heists, but they can also consult with the neighborhood boss and grandmaster for potential targets. The leadership's network of informants can provide them with particularly lucrative targets and give them logistical help such as identifying which watchmen are on the take and what sorts of magic traps guard whatever they want to steal.

In any case, members are expected to run their illicit operations past the relevant neighborhood boss and grandmaster beforehand, although trusted gang members can obtain permission for minor jobs on an ongoing basis.

Responsibilities: Staying in the gang's good graces is mostly a matter of reputation. As long as characters aren't caught by the authorities and keep earning money, they retain the benefits of gang membership. Their specific responsibilities are few.

Accordingly, gang membership doesn't interfere with a career as an adventurer in most cases. Members shouldn't openly consort with city authorities, nor should they disappear for months at a time; both would make the gang leadership suspicious.

THE RED KNIVES IN THE WORLD

"The only thing worse than the Red Knives is the alternative—criminals running wild across the city. The Red Knives at least show a little restraint."

Thora Ninegal, city councilor

Membership in the Red Knives immerses the PCs in the underworld and gives them access to all that entails. They can buy and sell on the black market, plan their own capers, and live in a world that combines D&D with countless stories about organized crime syndicates.

Structure: The day-to-day leadership of the Red Knives functions on two tracks. Each neighborhood in the city has a neighborhood boss responsible for all organized crime in that neighborhood. A neighborhood boss coordinates the Red Knives' efforts to keep the authorities off balance or on the payroll, receiving information from a vast network of informants from all walks of life.

The gang also has several dozen grandmasters, each in charge of a particular kind of crime. The Red Knives have a grandmaster of burglary, for example, and a grandmaster of protection rackets. The grandmasters train less experienced members in the finer points of their craft, and they coordinate those efforts on a citywide basis. The Grandmaster of Protection makes sure that her thugs in one neighborhood aren't charging a vastly different rate for Red Knives protection than elsewhere in the city.

Both the neighborhood bosses and grandmasters have a high degree of autonomy, and they're free to appoint and remove whatever subordinates and assistants they like. All the bosses and grandmasters report to one man: Voskoff, the city's Grandmaster of Thieves. Voskoff controls

Illus. by R. Spencer

A training room operated by the Red Knives Thieves' Gang

the overall efforts of the Red Knives, handles the organization's treasury, and pulls the political strings that make sure the gang remains safely in the shadows.

Voskoff knows he's only one betrayal away from permanent retirement, so he plays the more powerful neighborhood bosses and grandmasters against one another, encouraging competitive rivalries and ensuring that no one amasses enough power to become a rival to him. He steps in when the rivalries become bloody vendettas or otherwise threaten to expose the gang's lucrative but shadowy activities.

NPC Reactions

Most denizens of the city hate and fear members of the Red Knives Thieves' Gang. They have an initial attitude of unfriendly toward known members—which is why few thieves let their affiliation be known to anyone other than fellow members.

The Red Knives' ruthless reputation does have a side benefit: a +2 circumstance bonus on Intimidate checks when members interrogate a helpless captive.

Members of the city's underworld view the Red Knives more positively, because they benefit from the gang's smuggling operation, black markets, and information network. They have an initial attitude of friendly toward those who reveal themselves as Red Knives members.

RED KNIVES LORE

Characters with Gather Information or ranks in Knowledge (local) can research the Red Knives Thieves' Gang to learn more about them.

DC 10: The Red Knives run all organized crime in the city, from burglary to muggings to protection rackets.

DC 15: The gang also runs a thriving black market and smuggling operation. It has a near-monopoly on the trade in stolen goods.

DC 20: A mysterious man named Voskoff runs the Red Knives. Their main hideout is somewhere under the city, accessed through the storm sewer system.

If the PCs are looking for illicit goods, a DC 15 Gather Information check is sufficient to put them in contact with the Red Knives for a bargaining session.

THE RED KNIVES IN YOUR GAME

The Red Knives are designed to work in any large city or metropolis. They're a syndicate like the American mafia, so they operate a little more openly due to corrupt allies in high places.

Keeping PCs happy in the thieves' gang is a matter of making sure that the benefits of membership outweigh the costs—both the concrete costs of doing business with the gang and the more abstract costs of having to

deal with gang rivalries. The Red Knives aren't supposed to be a unified, cooperative organization. Dealing with ambitious, untrustworthy criminals as ostensible allies is supposed to be a tricky challenge for PCs who like political machinations and double-crosses.

Encounters: What makes a Red Knives encounter memorable is often the dialogue that precedes the fight—dialogue that continues as the fight progresses. Red Knives members live in a world of intrigue, intimidation, and ruthless reputation, but they use violence only as a means to an end. They first try to get their way by brandishing their blades and threatening violence. If you have ever wanted to impersonate the mafia dons of movies and television, the Red Knives are your chance.

Adaptation: As written, the Red Knives are a syndicate focused on burglary and robbery, but in your campaign they might have a different focus. In a more law-and-order city, they might primarily be a league of smugglers bringing contraband inside the city walls. They might or might not have a group of assassins in their employ. In a city full of political intrigue, they might be spies for hire, digging up the secrets of one power group on behalf of another.

Another factor to consider is the leadership. The Red Knives might be a stab-your-way-to-the-top organization, or the leadership might be hereditary (like in a mafia family). More sinister leadership possibilities exist as well: thieves' gangs run by mind flayers, vampires, or lycanthropes, for example.

GUILDS

Of course, not all organizations are about exploring lost ruins, defeating brooding strongholds of evil, or robbing a city blind. Most organizations are much more narrowly focused than this. These organizations have as many different names as there are occupations in the world, and even those based on identical trades can have wildly different compositions and agendas. As a whole, these narrowly focused organizations are known as guilds. A guild's purpose and benefits are more likely to appeal to a single character than to the entire party.

GUILD TYPES

Each guild type has associated skills useful to members, skills its members are expected to master. These skills, along with sample contacts for each type of guild, are given in the following descriptions. As the DM, you can modify this information to suit a particular guild. For example, if your campaign world features a criminal guild of pirates, you might want to swap Swim for Open Lock in its Associated Skills list. Finally, remember that while these guilds can cover rules for organizations such as thieves' guilds, mages' guilds, and the like, you should use the rules for guilds only for "minor" guilds, usually ones that play roles as NPC organizations. For player characters, it's best to use custom-built organizations such as the Red Knives.

Arcane Guilds

An arcane guild is a group of spellcasters—usually wizards. Such a guild typically provides shared libraries and an atmosphere that nurtures the creativity of its members. Assistance with the creation of new spells and magic items might also be offered.

Examples: Mages' guilds, alchemists' guilds.

Associated Classes: Adept, artificer (Eberron *Campaign Setting*), hexblade (*Complete Warrior*), sorcerer, wizard.

Associated Skills: Concentration, Craft (alchemy), Decipher Script, Knowledge (arcana), Spellcraft, Use Magic Device.

Sample Contact: Agosti of the Shadow Shore (see Table 5–1: Sample Contacts, page 154).

Criminal Guilds

Criminal guilds serve one primary purpose: to protect their own. A guild of this type offers its members a place to hide and train, compare notes, and learn about opportunities for profit. Members can also use their association with the guild as leverage when interacting with others who know its power.

Examples: Thieves' guild.

Associated Classes: Bard, rogue, scout (*Complete Adventurer*).

Associated Skills: Disable Device, Forgery, Hide, Move Silently, Open Lock, Sleight of Hand.

Sample Contact: Deogol Knifethrower (see Table 5–1: Sample Contacts, page 154).

Government Guilds

A government guild consists of public servants, politicians, soldiers, and others dedicated to the betterment of society. Such organizations are among the few that finance their operations through taxes and tariffs rather than through the sale of goods and services.

Examples: City guards, embassy.

Associated Classes: Cleric, expert, fighter.

Associated Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Intimidate, Knowledge (nobility and royalty), Sense Motive.

Sample Contact: Farhaan Nicabar (see Table 5–1: Sample Contacts, page 154).

Mercantile Guilds

A guild of this type provides a place in which its members can meet and talk with fellow shop-owners and merchants who deal in similar products and services. In addition, mercantile guilds offer their members protection from

fraud, theft, and other dangers of doing business. A few of the wealthier mercantile organizations even provide loans for members who wish to start new businesses. Merchants who make their living with the Craft skill often form guilds of this type.

Examples: Carpenters' guild, smiths' guild.

Associated Classes: Expert, rogue.

Associated Skills: Appraise, Bluff, Craft (any one), Knowledge (local), Profession (any one), Speak Language.

Sample Contact: Vasilii the Fat (see Table 5–1: Sample Contacts, page 154).

Mercenary Guilds

These guilds provide their members with safe places to rest in dangerous regions, centralized postings of job opportunities, and the benefit of the guild's reputation. Mercenary guilds also offer healing for wounded members and safe havens for those who need to hide from enemies.

Examples: Barbarian clan, mercenary group.

Associated Classes: Barbarian, fighter, monk, soulknife (*Expanded Psionics Handbook*), warrior.

Associated Skills: Climb, Handle Animal, Intimidate, Jump, Ride, Use Rope.

Sample Contact: Jal Omari (see Table 5–1: Sample Contacts, page 154).

Naturalist Guilds

A naturalist guild can be a group of people who prefer the simple life, an organization of bounty hunters who specialize in tracking targets through the woodlands, a cult of nature worshipers, or just about any other group whose members live and work in the natural areas of the world. Such a guild provides its members with a support structure and offers them services not available in the wild.

Examples: Explorer society, hunters' lodge members.

Associated Classes: Barbarian, druid, ranger.

Associated Skills: Handle Animal, Listen, Knowledge (nature), Search, Spot, Survival.

Sample Contact: Wildcat Rodorsson (see Table 5–1: Sample Contacts, page 154).

Performer Guilds

Those who make a living with the Perform skill band together into guilds to promote the services they provide. Affiliation with such a guild also allows members to provide more spectacular shows than they could singly by combining the talents of several members. Typically, the membership includes performers who complement one another's specialties—dancers and singers with musicians, for example. If a performer guild maintains a guildhouse, its members can often draw patrons there in groups to watch performances, rather than seeking out individual inns or taverns at which to ply their trade. Finally, a performer guild encourages members with similar talents to practice together, and to trade songs, poems, plays, or performance tips.

Examples: Minstrel society, playwright organization, theater or theatrical company.

Associated Classes: Bard, rogue.

Associated Skills: Balance or Tumble, Disguise, Diplomacy, Escape Artist, Perform, Profession (any one), Sleight of Hand.

Sample Contact: Nisha of the Many Eyes (see Table 5–1: Sample Contacts, page 154).

Psionic Guilds

A psionic guild is a group of psionic NPCs—primarily psions, although other psionic characters are normally welcome as well. This kind of guild is dedicated to enhancing the mental might of its members by pooling resources, offering shared mentalities, and assisting with the creation of new psionic powers and artifacts of cognizance.

Examples: College of psychics, soothsayers' guild.

Associated Classes: Psion, wilder (both from *Expanded Psionics Handbook*).

Associated Skills: Autohypnosis, Concentration, Knowledge (psionics), Psicraft, Use Psionic Device.

Sample Contact: Ialdabode (see Table 5–1: Sample Contacts, page 154).

Religious Guilds

A religious guild typically claims the faithful of a specific religion as its members. However, this category can also encompass organizations that span multiple faiths, as well as secret orders that operate without the knowledge of the bulk of the faithful.

Examples: Church of St. Cuthbert, nature cult.

Associated Classes: Cleric, favored soul (*Complete Divine*), paladin.

Associated Skills: Concentration, Diplomacy, Heal, Knowledge (religion), Knowledge (any one other), Spellcraft.

Sample Contact: Cynric the Pure (see Table 5–1: Sample Contacts, page 154).

Scholastic Guilds

Scholastic guilds are dedicated to furthering the education of their members, and sometimes of whole communities. These organizations provide places of learning, libraries, study chambers, and an intellectual atmosphere to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge.

Examples: Secret societies, universities.

Associated Classes: Expert, wizard.

Associated Skills: Decipher Script, Gather Information, Knowledge (any four).

Sample Contact: Orkatz of the Green City (see Table 5–1: Sample Contacts, page 154).

JOINING A GUILD

Most guilds are strictly NPC organizations. For most PCs, the prospect of joining the Benevolent Order of Bakers is simply not exciting enough to become a major feature of their character's development. At the same time, guilds demand much less from their members than the more aggressive and dangerous organizations presented earlier in this chapter. If a PC simply wants a place to invest some of his earnings, practice some of his skills, or earn a little cash on the side, joining a guild is probably his best choice.

Entry Requirements: At least one level in a guild associated class, 4 ranks in a guild associated skill , entry dues (25 gp).

Unlike other organizations, guilds only rarely actively recruit members. Once a character has become a master of a specific trade, he's more likely to found his own guild; established guilds generally don't have much interest in recruiting new upstarts who have already mastered their chosen craft.

As a result, a PC typically has to track down the guildhouse or its members and apply for membership. A Gather Information check can provide specific information about a known guild, such as the location of its guildhouse. Finding the meeting place of a relatively well-known, open guild (such as a local baker's guild) is a fairly simple task (DC 10). Locating the guildhouse of the secret society that pulls the strings of the city government, on the other hand, might be quite difficult, requiring characters to gather clues through adventuring before even attempting the DC 30 Gather Information check.

A guild obtains the lion's share of its income from the dues paid by its lay members, plus aid and residuals from its active members. When a character first joins a guild, he must pay a one-time entrance fee. As a general rule, a guild's entrance fee is 25 gp.

In addition, guild members are expected to pay a monthly fee equal to 5 gp per character level. Feel free to adjust these amounts to fit the style of play if your campaign does not follow the expected PC wealth model detailed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

GUILD BENEFITS

Once a character has joined a guild, she can immediately enjoy the benefits. New guild members receive general benefits, as given in the following section, that are indistinguishable from one guild to the next. An active guild member (one who has taken the Favored in Guild feat) enjoys all these general benefits plus one specialized benefit specific to the guild type (see the Favored in Guild feat, page 227, for details).

- All guildhouses include barracks and kitchens, so that every member can be guaranteed food and a safe place to sleep while she's in the vicinity. In smaller guilds, she might need to cook for herself, but the food is supplied.
- Membership in a guild means a better likelihood of a positive response to requests. The initial attitude of a fellow guild member is always one step closer to helpful than her normal starting attitude (see *Player's Handbook* page 72).
- Guild members help their own. A character gains a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy or Gather Information checks made while talking to a fellow guild member.
- The guild subsidizes the cost of goods, supplies, and guild-related services, reducing the price to a member by 10%.
- Any member who falls on desperate times can call upon her guild for aid. To make such a request, she must make a Diplomacy check with a cumulative –2 penalty for each previous call for aid she has made to that guild.

  If aid is given, it most often comes in the form of a monetary loan for a term of one month (see Table 6–12: Guild Loans for amounts and Diplomacy DCs). If the member fails to repay the money on time, she is typically expelled from the guild, and the loan is absolved. Certain guilds (especially criminal guilds) have stricter penalties for those who default on guild loans. Such guilds might even hire assassins to make examples of those who fail to repay.

Table 6–12: Guild Loans

Desired Loan Amount	Diplomacy DC
Up to the member's monthly dues	15
Up to the member's monthly dues × 10	20
Up to the member's monthly dues × 100	25

- Every member gains a contact specific to her guild (see Table 5–1: Contacts, page 154, for sample contacts).

  It's possible for a character to lose her guild membership, especially if the guild leaders learn that she has compromised the guild in some way (giving guild secrets away to an enemy guild, for example). Banishment from a guild results in immediate loss of all benefits gained from both the guild and any guild feats the character possesses. Additionally, the attitudes of guild members toward the character become one step less friendly (returning to their original status unless other changes have occurred). For example, guild members who became friendly to the character when she joined the guild revert to indifferent when she is banished.

PLAYING A GUILD MEMBER

Joining a guild brings responsibilities. Each member is expected to serve the guild on an ongoing basis. If a character expects to be away from her responsibilities while pursuing other goals (such as adventuring), she can ask her guild to waive these service requirements while she is away, but in return for that favor she must agree to pay the guild 10% of the value of any income or treasure gained on her expedition.

Specific guild service requirements depend on the guild's type.

Arcane: Any scholastic research or new spells the member researches must be copied and donated to the guild's library.

Criminal: The only stated requirement of a criminal guild is that members must not divulge guild secrets to any nonmember. Any particularly large-scale or high-profile crime requires guild consent, and the guild usually takes 15% of the member profits from such capers.

Government: Each member of a government guild must spend at least 20 hours a week working for the guild.

Mercantile: In addition to the regular dues it collects, a mercantile guild levies a guild tax of 15% on the monthly income that members' guild-affiliated business ventures produce.

Mercenary: A mercenary guild requires each member to spend no fewer than 20 hours per week on missions and patrols. Generally, such duties are fairly safe and do not require much (if any) combat. In times of war or danger, however, members are required to support whatever cause the guild does. With a successful DC 25 Diplomacy check, a member can have an adventure with her companions registered as a "patrol," and time spent adventuring counts toward this 20 hour week. Each additional attempt to register an adventure as a "patrol" increases the target Diplomacy DC by 2.

Naturalist: Because of their isolation, naturalist guilds require more support and supplies than other guilds. Since their members are often absent for extended periods, each is required to pay a tithe equal to at least 25 gp per character level on every visit to a guildhouse, but no more often than once a month. This is in addition to the member's monthly dues. Tithes are usually paid in gear, food, or magic items.

Performer: A performer guild requires each member to perform his chosen services in support of other guild members as necessary. Generally, such service requires 1d4–1 days (8 hours per day) each week.

Psionic: Any new powers or psionic lore the member discovers must be shared with the guild.

Religious: A religious guild requires only that its members adhere to the specific tenets and strictures of the faith.

Scholastic: A scholastic guild requires its members to contribute regularly to the guild's knowledge and lore. This service equates to at least 20 hours per week spent in study, writing, and discourse with other members.

Combat Duties: Most guilds don't expect their members to have to fight as part of their duties to the guild. Some, such as criminal guilds and naturalist guilds, are exceptions, but for the most part the life of a guildmember is relatively safe. In fact, belonging to a guild can often put unwelcome restraints on the adventuring lifestyle. Some guilds are franchised across multiple cities and even nations, but others are local affairs. Characters who belong to a local guild might find that traveling all over the world to go on adventures can threaten their standing in the guild. Likewise, those characters who spend all their time fighting trolls and exploring abandoned mines can find it difficult to make time to fulfill their guild responsibilities. As a general rule, the nature of the campaign and the character should dictate if joining a guild is a good idea or not.

Advancement: In most guilds, there are three levels of membership. A lay guildmember is a person who has paid her dues and qualified for the guild with the correct skills, but does little more than practice the guild's affiliated skills. A character who wants to take on a more pivotal role in a guild's direction must take the Favored in Guild feat. Taking this feat indicates the guild has taken notice of the character's skill, and the lay guildmembers look to her for guidance and advice. Meetings for guild policies and the like are generally open only to active members.

Finally, all guilds have at least one guildmaster. Guilds that have multiple guildhouses in multiple locations have one guildmaster per house, and one of these is a grandmaster who oversees the entire guild. Becoming a guildmaster is something only the most devoted members can aspire to. Qualifying for and taking the Guildmaster feat is one way to become a guildmaster, but the position can also be awarded or inherited.

Missions: Although most guilds don't send their members on dangerous missions, all guilds value members who have strong adventuring skills (as long as a guild member doesn't let adventuring get in the way of her duties to the guild). More often than they would like, guilds find themselves in need of work best suited for adventurers. Perhaps a remote guildhouse has fallen under the control of a band of kobolds. Maybe a high-profile commission requires the gathering of rare components in a dangerous jungle. Or perhaps someone's been causing the guild trouble lately, and the guildmasters need someone to investigate the matter. In these cases, guilds much prefer to turn to their own for solutions. Involving outsiders runs a risk of allowing guild secrets to fall into the wrong hands, so if one of their members is known to be an adventurer, chances are good that the character will be contacted when such a mission arises.

GUILDS IN THE WORLD

Although this section presents guilds in a generic manner, no two guilds are exactly alike. Similarly, guilds of like manner aren't necessarily affiliated. The leatherworker's guild in one city might be allied with the leatherworker's guild of the city up the coast, but they could be in bitter competition with the guild in the city to the south. Some guilds are known by simple names, such as the Blacksmiths' Guild, while others are known by complex or vague names such as the Honorable Association of Smiths or the Iron House.

No matter what their purposes, all guilds can be sorted into one of three categories according to their power in society and the number of members they have.

Minor: These guilds either don't interact much with society or lack the resources to make much of an impression on their home cities. An minor guild typically has between five and ten members. Examples include bands of street thugs, minor mercenary groups, exclusive aristocrat clubs, religions dedicated to local minor deities, adventuring parties, and groups of merchants or crafters who have little or no contact with people outside their immediate environs. Guilds such as these rarely have guildhouses; their members meet in public areas, members' homes, or unique natural locations (such as a forest clearing or a sea cave entrance). The highest-level member of a minor guild is usually between 1st and 4th level.

Standard: Guilds in this category are quite common in large cities. With anywhere from eleven to a hundred members, they wield some degree of financial and political clout. In addition to the typical thieves' guild, standard guilds might include a city watch, a prestigious school, the faithful of a deity in a specific city, a troupe of traveling entertainers, or a group of merchants that has a particularly strong influence in a single city. Any group of like-minded adventurers who share resources, information, and a common stronghold can be considered a standard guild. A guild in this category typically maintains a single guildhouse in which many of its members can rest and relax. The highest-level member of a standard guild is usually between 4th and 11th level.

Expansive: These guilds are the least common, but they are easily the most recognizable. Such guilds can have hundreds or even thousands of members spread out over numerous cities and locations. An expansive guild could be a consortium of merchants from all the nation's major cities, a shadowy underground network of assassins with dozens of cells, the faithful of a widespread religion, or an organization of adventurers from several nations dedicated to the destruction of a particularly nefarious villain. A guild in this category typically maintains numerous guildhouses spread out among dozens of cities and nations. The highest-level member of an expansive guild is usually between 11th and 18th level.

GUILD LORE

Since the rules for guilds are presented in an abstract manner, you should tailor what information is available on a particular guild to match that guild's type and the nature of its members and guildmasters. As a general rule, Knowledge (local) is the skill people use to determine information about a guild. A character with at least 5 ranks in one of the guild's affiliated skills gains a +2 bonus due to skill synergy on this Knowledge (local) check.

As an example, here is some of the information a character might learn about Saltmarsh's Jewelers' Guild (see page 128).

DC 10: The Jewelers' Guildhall is an ugly building located in east Saltmarsh, between the Scriveners' and Smiths' guildhalls and just west of the Cathedral of Pelor. The guildmembers are particularly adept at polishing pearls and coral.

DC 15: The guildmaster is a grumpy human man named Rodelik Karneth. It's said he paid to have the inner doors of the guildhouse *arcane locked* from his own pocket, and only a few members of the guild know the passwords.

DC 20: Guildmaster Karneth wasn't always an upstanding citizen; he was a thug and a cutpurse in his youth until a member of the Fastralli family set him on the path to redemption.

DC 30: Some of Guildmaster Karneth's old friends were recently released from prison, and rumor holds that they're nursing some powerful grudges against their old friend Rodelik, who might have had a hand in revealing their identities to the city watch so many years ago.

GUILDS IN YOUR GAME

Of all the sample organizations detailed here, guilds are the easiest to introduce into an ongoing campaign simply because of their generic nature. Often, the PCs' interaction with a guild is fairly minor; they might only need to contact the leader of the shipwright's guild in order to commission a ship, for example. But if a character wishes to join a guild to enjoy the benefits, introducing a new guild is a simple matter. Characters who become involved in their guilds can also become entangled in guild politics, and these developments can spur their own adventures.

Additionally, two new feats presented here should be of special interest to players who wish to join guilds. The Favored in Guild feat allows a character to take on a more important role in her guild, and to gain an additional benefit from her affiliation. The Guildmaster feat allows a character to take over a local branch of his guild. Including these feats places extra responsibility on you as a DM because events in the campaign can easily render them inactive or useless. For example, a character who takes the Favored in Guild feat can't enjoy its benefits if a massive fire burns down the guildhouse and kills all the other guild members. As DM, you must ensure that such events occur only rarely, if at all. If you do decide to remove a guild in this manner, any character with guild feats should have a chance to join new or similar guilds before too many game sessions pass. Upon doing so, she should immediately regain the benefits of her guild feats.

New Feat: Favored in Guild

You are an active and valued member of your guild.

Prerequisite: Membership in a guild.

Benefit: Select one of your guild's associated skills. As long as you remain a member of that guild, you gain a +2 competence bonus on all checks made with that skill.

As a fringe benefit, you also gain an ability relating to your guild's type, as described below.

Arcane: The guild subsidizes the creation of magic items, reducing your raw material costs by 5%.

Criminal: The guild opens up new options for black marketeering. Once every character level, you can purchase any product or service for 75% of its actual price in any city in which your guild maintains a guildhouse.

Government: You gain a +1 bonus on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks when dealing with members of any guild, including your own.

Mercantile: You can charge a little bit more for the goods and services you sell, since membership in the guild implies quality. Once per character level, you can sell a good or service for 100% markup over its regular price in any city where the organization maintains a guildhouse.

Mercenary: Members of the same mercenary guild tend to use combat tactics that mesh well with each other. Whenever you are adjacent to another member, each of you gains a +1 competence bonus to Armor Class.

Naturalist: A naturalist guild uses a complex and constantly evolving set of trailglyphs and blazes to keep its members informed of dangers, shelter, good hunting, and other hazards or hidden benefits in the wilderness. You gain a +2 competence bonus on any Survival check made to keep from getting lost or to avoid a natural hazard, such as quicksand. In addition, you can choose a particular type of creature from the following list: animal, fey, giant, monstrous humanoid, plant, or vermin. You gain a +5 competence bonus on any Knowledge (nature) check you make concerning your chosen creature type.

Performer: While in a city that has a guildhouse, you can substitute a Perform or Profession check for a Diplomacy or Gather Information check by offering your service for free. In addition, you gain twice the normal income when using the Perform or Profession skill to earn money.

Psionic: The guild subsidizes the creation of psionic items, reducing your raw material costs by 5%.

Religious: Your faith is bolstered by active membership in the guild. Once per character level, you can deem a particularly insidious mind-affecting ability possessed by an enemy to be a test of faith, thereby gaining a one-time +5 bonus on your Will saving throw.

Scholastic: Once per character level, you can take 20 on any Knowledge skill in which you have at least 1 rank. Using this ability takes 1 hour, and you can do so only while you are in your guildhouse, since you must research the desired information in the guild's holdings from other guild members to accomplish the task.

Normal: To receive general benefits from your guild, you must pay your monthly dues. You do not gain any guild fringe benefits.

New Feat: Guildmaster

You are one of the leaders of your guild.

Prerequisites: Favored in Guild, Leadership, at least one guildmaster-associated feat (see the table below); your followers and cohorts must also qualify to join the guild; and at least one of your guild-associated skills must be a class skill for you and must be at maximum rank.

Benefits: You gain a +2 competence bonus on each of your guild-associated skills.

In addition, because of your enhanced status, you no longer need to pay guild dues. If your guild is a standard or expansive one, you can expect special treatment—specifically, free lodging, free food, an office, and a simple workshop, laboratory, or other space that contains any basic tools of your guild's trade—at any guildhouse.

Furthermore, as a guildmaster, you have some degree of authority over other guild members. Once per day, you can exchange the primary cohort you gained from your Leadership feat for a different cohort from your guild. Otherwise, the standard rules for choosing a cohort apply. The DM determines the actual pool of cohorts available to you, but the new cohort is usually from the list of associated classes provided in the description of each guild type (see Guild Types, page 223).

Special: Guildmasters are expected to spend at least 8 consecutive hours per week dealing with administrative matters and interacting with other guild members. A guildmaster who fails to meet this requirement loses the benefits of this feat for the following week.

Special: You must keep at least one of your guild-associated class skills at maximum rank as you attain new levels. A guildmaster who fails to meet this requirement loses the benefits of this feat until he gains the necessary ranks.

Special: As a nonstandard award for completing a particularly dangerous and lengthy mission of great importance to a PC's guild, the DM can award this feat as a bonus feat to anyone who qualifies for it.

Guildmaster-Associated Feats

Guild	Associated Feats
Arcane	Any item creation feat
Criminal	Agile, Deceitful, Deft Hands, Nimble Fingers, Stealthy
Government	Negotiator, Persuasive, Skill Focus (any guild-associated skill)
Mercantile	Deceitful, Diligent, Skill Focus (any guild-associated skill)
Mercenary	Combat Expertise, Dodge, Endurance, Mounted Combat
Naturalist	Alertness, Animal Affinity, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Natural Spell, Run, Self-Sufficient
Performer	Acrobatic, Agile, Athletic, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Perform or Profession)
Psionic	Any psionic item creation feat
Religious	Extra Turning, Improved Turning, Skill Focus (Knowledge [religion]), Weapon Focus (with deity's favored weapon)
Scholastic	Skill Focus (Knowledge [any])

Illus. by A. Swekel

Chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* covers the basics of magic item construction and offers hundreds of sample items. But over time, players become blasé about their characters finding "yet another *+1 rapier*." This chapter offers some new ways to customize the magic items in your campaign—plus some special items that provide more than just static bonuses to character attributes.

MAGIC ITEM SIGNATURE TRAITS

Not all magic items are created equal, and even those with the same powers need not be identical. The items described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, as well as those presented in these pages and in other books, are baseline examples of items that serve particular purposes. Individual spellcasters add embellishments to items they create for themselves and for others—sometimes adding new features to standard items, or even creating items that can be worn without taking up magic item slots. But incorporating such extensive alterations generally increases the item's creation time and cost dramatically, and not all spellcasters want to expend the extra time and resources needed to alter their creations to this degree. However, they can still personalize their work by adding a signature trait to the items they make.

A signature trait is a minor effect that changes the item's appearance in some way. For example, a weapon could be wreathed in a cool mist, a shield might be ringed with tiny skulls, or a cloak might seem to swallow up the light shining upon it. Such traits provide no mechanical effect or benefit—they simply make items seem special and unique.

Signature traits vary widely. Since no single character can master more than a handful of them, these traits can be used to identify a particular item's creator.

SIGNATURE TRAIT DESCRIPTIONS

The following signature traits can be applied to appropriate magic items.

Barbed: The item has jagged hooks or spines.

Bitter: An item that has this trait tastes, smells, and just plain looks altogether foul and unpleasant.

Bleeding: A bleeding item oozes a trickle of blood as long as it is held.

Table 7–1: Signature Traits

d%	Trait	d%	Trait
01–04	Barbed	53–56	Loud
05–08	Bitter	57–60	Multicolored
09–12	Bleeding	61–64	Religious
13–16	Brilliant	65–68	Shadowy
17–20	Clean	69–72	Shrouded
21–24	Comfortable	73–76	Sizzling
25–28	Crude	77–80	Slimy
29–32	Dreadful	81–84	Smoky
33–36	Fashionable	85–88	Sparking
37–40	Flickering	89–92	Totemic
41–44	Gaudy	93–96	Warped
45–48	Glowing	97–100	Writhing
49–52	Heavy		

Brilliant: The item emits brief flashes of bright light whenever it is activated. The creator determines the color of this light upon selecting the trait.

Clean: An item that has this trait never becomes stained or dirty.

Comfortable: The item is soothing and relaxing to wear or hold.

Crude: A crude item appears to be made from base materials, and the workmanship looks shoddy.

Dreadful: The item bears frightening emblems, such as skulls or leering faces, which seem to move when the item is activated or used. The creator chooses the specific images upon selecting the trait.

Fashionable: An item that has this trait is particularly attractive to look upon.

Flickering: This item flickers with a faint black flame that is too dim to provide any illumination.

Gaudy: A gaudy item might be brightly colored or covered with numerous fake jewels. It might even shimmer with a faint rainbow light.

Glowing: This item sheds light equal to that of a candle for 1 round upon activation or whenever a charge is expended.

Heavy: An item that has this trait feels unusually heavy when held, though its actual weight is unchanged.

Loud: Upon activation, a loud item emits an incongruous sound (such as a lion's roar, a strong musical chord, or a short exclamation).

Multicolored: The item's coloration changes at random intervals.

Religious: A religious item bears the symbol of a particular faith or deity and incorporates icons or colors used by adherents of that faith.

Illus. by R. Mimura

A bone devil decked out in dreadful plate mail

Shadowy: A shadowy item is dead black in color, and it seems to swallow up any light that shines upon it.

Shrouded: An item that has this trait is perpetually shrouded in a faint aura of cool mist.

Sizzling: A sizzling item emits a faint, burning hiss whenever it strikes flesh.

Slimy: A faint residue of slime coats this item at all times.

Smoky: The item emits a faintly visible trail of smoke whenever it is held.

Sparking: An item that has this trait gives off sparks whenever it strikes a foe or is struck by a weapon.

Totemic: This item is decorated with fetishes, carvings, and markings that identify it as sacred to a specific tribe or group of individuals.

Warped: A warped item seems to be constructed in an odd manner, and it has curves or protrusions that don't correspond to any known method of creation.

Writhing: Upon activation, this item briefly twists and writhes like a snake.

Learning a Signature Trait

Each time a character selects an item creation feat, he can select one signature trait to be associated with it (see Table 7–1: Signature Traits). For example, a cleric who selects Craft Wondrous Item at 3rd level might choose fashionable, religious, or shadowy as the signature trait for his wondrous items.

A character can choose the same trait multiple times and apply it to different item creation feats. For example, if the cleric described above chose Craft Wand at 6th level, he could select the same signature trait for his wands that he chose for his wondrous items at 3rd level, or he could choose a different trait. Typically, a character who routinely creates items limits himself to a small number of signature traits—or even just one—since his creations are associated so closely with him that they become part of his own identity.

Applying a Signature Trait

Adding a signature trait has no effect on the cost to create, time to create, or market price of the item to which it is applied. It changes only the appearance of the item, not its function.

The signature trait that a character chooses for a specific item creation feat

is automatically applied to all items he creates with that feat, as long as the result is reasonable. For example, a *belt of giant strength* isn't a weapon, so applying the sparking trait (see Table 7–1) to it would serve no purpose.

A single item can have only one signature trait. Should a character have a choice of traits that could apply to a particular item, he must select only one. For example, creating *bracers of archery* requires both the Craft Magic Arms and Armor feat and the Craft Wondrous Item feat, so a character who has both could apply the trait associated with either of those feats, but not both of them at once.

IDENTIFYING A SIGNATURE TRAIT

By definition, every signature trait gives items made with it a certain identifiable characteristic. Anyone who examines such an item should be able to determine which signature trait it possesses just by the way it looks or feels. If any doubt remains, a DC 10 Spellcraft check identifies a signature trait.

Furthermore, signature traits provide bonuses on other checks. Any character who makes a successful skill check or bardic knowledge check to learn about the origin, history, or powers of an item with a signature trait gains a +2 circumstance bonus on the check if he knows which trait it has. See Identifying Items, page 212 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide,* for more information on such checks.

ASSIGNING A SIGNATURE TRAIT

When you place magic items created by a particular NPC as treasure, simply assign them traits according to that character's choices. When you randomly roll for magic items, assume that any item has a 5% chance to possess a signature trait. If a trait is present, assign a specific one that seems appropriate, or randomly determine a trait by rolling on Table 7–1. If the result doesn't match the item (such as a bitter *cloak of resistance*), reroll until you get a result that does match.

BONDED MAGIC ITEMS

Most magic items in the D&D game are created by powerful spellcasters—typically wizards—who use item creation feats to unlock the secrets of weaving incantations into physical objects. Once they are created, such items work reliably for anyone capable of using them properly. Improvements and upgrades to existing magic items are usually accomplished in the same manner.

But what if a character could unlock a favorite item's powers through her own deeds? After all, it's far more heroic to say that your sword gained the flaming burst ability because you survived a horrible, fiery conflagration than to admit that you dropped it off at the local wizard's tower for a few days along with a chest of gold pieces.

The rules in this section provide characters with a new option for creating or improving magic items. Put simply, a character can spend his own gold and experience points to imbue a bonded item with magical powers. But the system is more than just a different way to pay for magic items—it also encourages roleplaying by using a character's adventures to guide his selection of magic items (and vice versa). Every one of the bonding rituals described below is an adventure unto itself, and you can use them to build exciting encounters that engage both the characters and the players.

CREATING A BOND

By undertaking a special ritual and paying certain costs, a character can create a bond between himself and any one item that has an innate value. The chosen item need not be magic, but it must meet at least one of the following qualifications.

- Item is masterwork.
- Item is magic.
- Item is worth at least 100 gp.

The bond so created lets the character imbue the item with magical properties, and it grants him one or more special abilities as well. A bonded item cannot be imbued with a temporary or single-use power in the way that a potion or a scroll can. Only permanent items (such as magic weapons or magic rings) or items with multiple charges (such as wands or staffs) can be created through bonding rituals.

To create a bond with an item, a character must undergo one of the bonding rituals described below. Functionally, any ritual can grant any property to an item, but you can rule that only specific rituals confer certain abilities.

The chosen ritual links the character to the item and allows him to imbue it with some magical property (or improve its existing magical properties) as part of that procedure. In addition to meeting the requirements given in the ritual description, the character must pay the cost of the special materials needed—unguents, incense, special clothing, and so forth—and expend XP as noted. This latter requirement represents the character lending a portion of his life force to the item to provide it with power. Any materials required by the ritual are consumed or otherwise rendered useless for later use.

The gp and XP costs for imbuing a bonded item with magical properties are the same as those normally required to craft the item with the requisite item creation feat. For example, a character who wishes to imbue a masterwork longsword with a +1 enhancement bonus through a bonding ritual must pay 1,000 gp in material costs and 40 XP, just as a character with the Craft Magic Arms and Armor feat would. If the item has any other

special costs—an expensive material component, for example—those must also be paid.

The character can otherwise ignore the normal prerequisites for creating the item (such as the ability to cast a certain spell), with the following exceptions.

- If the creation of the item requires a specific class feature or feat (other than an item creation feat), or a certain number of ranks in a skill, the creator must meet that prerequisite.
- If the creation of the item requires a character of a certain caster level (for example, a *+3 longsword*), the creator's character level must equal or exceed the caster level prerequisite.

Once the ritual is complete, the item behaves like any other magic item with the same properties, but only for the character who completed the ritual. In the hands of any other character, it functions as if it had none of the special powers granted by the bonding ritual. Thus, a player whose character bonds with an item that already has magical properties must keep track of which ones resulted from the bond and which ones stemmed from the traditional magic item creation process. For example, a *+3 longsword* that gained the flaming special ability through a bonding ritual functions just like any other *+3 flaming longsword* when wielded by the character. In the hands of another character, however, it is a normal *+3 longsword*.

A character wishing to add another magical property to a bonded item must undergo another bonding ritual and pay the appropriate gp and XP cost for the new power. For example, adding a +1 enhancement bonus to a masterwork longsword requires one bonding ritual. If the character wishes to add the keen special ability to the weapon at a later date, he must undergo another ritual. This new ritual need not be the same as any previous one, but he loses the benefits that he himself gained from the previous ritual (see Bonding Rituals, below, for details) upon performing the new one.

No character can be bonded to more than one item at a time. Creating a bond to a second item automatically severs any existing bond the character might have. The previously bonded item loses any magical properties it gained from bonding rituals, and the character also loses any special abilities gained from those rituals.

Other Benefits of a Bond

In addition to imbuing a chosen item with magical properties, a bonding ritual grants the character a minor benefit or special ability, as noted in the individual bonding ritual descriptions below. A character who also has the Truebond feat (see the sidebar) gains additional special abilities specific to the bonding ritual completed.

BONDING RITUALS

The bonding ritual is a combination of a task and a ceremony. The character wishing to create the bond must carry out both parts of the ritual—usually in any order, though this requirement varies in some rituals. Unless otherwise stated, the character can have assistance in completing the ritual. For example, other characters might aid the bonding PC in defeating the necessary foe, or they might contribute gold toward the material cost for the ritual. However, the bonding PC must personally complete the task, and no other character can contribute XP toward the ritual.

Bonding rituals come in many forms. Functionally, each accomplishes the same purpose—establishing a bond between character and item—but the task, prerequisites, and special benefits vary widely. Typically, the character chooses which bonding ritual he wishes to complete, though the DM might decide that certain rituals are more appropriate for particular items or magical properties than others. (The Ritual of Faith, for example, might always be required to grant an alignment-based special ability, such as anarchic or holy, to a weapon.) Each ritual description gives a few example items as an aid to DMs who wish to customize bonding rituals in this way.

A character can complete more than one bonding ritual for the same item, and in fact, most characters who bond with items do so. The new bonding ritual need not be of the same type as the previous one, but each new ritual replaces any special abilities the character gained from the previous one (including any benefit of the Truebond feat) with those corresponding to the new ritual. For example, suppose a character uses the Ritual of Dread to imbue his weapon with a +1 enhancement bonus, then later uses the Ritual of Faith to add the holy special ability to the same weapon. The weapon keeps all the magical properties granted by both rituals, but the character loses the special abilities granted by the

NEW FEAT: TRUEBOND

Your bond to your chosen item becomes stronger.

Prerequisite: Character level 6th, completion of a bonding ritual.

Benefit: You gain a special ability from the bond you have established with your chosen item, as noted in the ritual description for the last bonding ritual you completed. This special ability applies only while the bonded item is in your immediate possession (held or carried on your body).

In addition, you can use *locate object* as a spell-like ability at will (caster level equals your character level), but only to locate the bonded item.

Ritual of Dread and replaces them with the benefits of the Ritual of Faith.

BONDING RITUAL DESCRIPTIONS

The bonding rituals described below are presented in the following format.

Ritual Name

The entry begins with a description of the ritual in plain language.

Prerequisite: This portion of the description gives the requirements for the character undertaking the ritual. These might include a minimum base attack bonus, a minimum number of ranks in one or more skills, a minimum caster level, a feat or feats (other than item creation feats), or any of numerous other requirements. Typically, these prerequisites are not difficult to meet, though a single ritual might have more than one.

Task: The task that the character must accomplish to complete the ritual is described here. Not all tasks are appropriate for all items—for example, delivering a killing blow with the item is a task that works well for weapons, but not for rings or belts. Working such tasks into the campaign and making them part of the ongoing storyline increases the level of personal interest and investment that players have in the campaign.

Ceremony: This section describes the ceremony that the bonding character must complete. He must pay any gp cost or XP cost as part of this ceremony.

Benefit: The minor benefit or benefits accrued by a character who completes the bonding ritual are noted here. These benefits are usable only while the character is in possession of the bonded item.

Truebond Benefit: This portion of the description notes the benefit or benefits accrued by a character with the Truebond feat (see the sidebar) who completes the ritual. These benefits are usable only while the character is in possession of the bonded item, and then only if he still meets the prerequisites for the Truebond feat.

Typical Items: The last entry in the description offers examples of the types of items most commonly associated with the ritual.

Ritual of Blood

You forge a bond with your chosen weapon by using it to defeat a powerful enemy.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +3.

Task: You must use the chosen weapon to strike the killing blow against a living creature whose Challenge Rating is at least 2 higher than your character level. The creature must be an aberration, animal, dragon, giant, magical beast, monstrous humanoid, or vermin.

Ceremony: Within 1 hour of completing the task, you must complete a 15-minute ceremony of respect for the vanquished foe, during which you anoint both yourself and the weapon with the creature's blood (or similar sort of bodily fluid).

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on Knowledge checks related to creatures of the same type as the vanquished foe (see the Knowledge skill description, page 78 of the *Player's Handbook*). For example, defeating a wyvern as part of the Ritual of Blood grants you a +2 bonus on Knowledge (arcana) checks regarding dragons.

Truebond Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus on damage rolls against creatures of the same type as the vanquished foe.

Typical Items: This ritual can be used with any weapon.

Ritual of Dread

You forge a bond with your chosen weapon by overcoming your natural fear of life-draining effects.

Prerequisite: Intimidate 6 ranks.

Task: You must use the chosen weapon to deliver the killing blow against a creature with the energy drain special attack (such as a vampire) whose Challenge Rating is at least 2 higher than your character level.

Ceremony: Within 1 minute of completing the task, you must spend a full-round action to channel the dissipating negative energy of your vanquished foe into yourself and your weapon. This process bestows one negative level on you, which must remain in effect for 24 hours. If the negative level is removed by any means during this period, the ritual automatically fails. At the end of the 24-hour waiting period, the negative level disappears as if you had successfully saved against it, and the ceremony is complete.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on Fortitude saves made to remove negative levels.

Truebond Benefit: You can ignore the effects of a single negative level, taking no penalties on rolls and losing neither hit points nor spells. (You must still make the usual saving throw 24 hours later to remove the negative level so that it does not become permanent.) If you have gained more than one negative level, you function as if you had one less negative level than you actually do.

Typical Items: This ritual can be used with any weapon.

Ritual of Faith

You forge a bond with the chosen item by using it in battle against an enemy of your faith.

Prerequisites: Knowledge (religion) 3 ranks, able to cast 2nd-level divine spells.

Task: While wielding or wearing the item, you must deliver the killing blow to an outsider whose Challenge Rating is at least 2 higher than your character level. At least one component of this outsider's alignment must be opposed to yours. For example, if you are lawful good, the outsider must be either chaotic or evil. If you are neutral, neither component of the outsider's alignment can be

neutral (that is, it must be lawful good, chaotic good, lawful evil, or chaoric evil).

Ceremony: Within 1 hour of completing the task, you must begin an 8-hour ritual of prayer and concentration in a temple or on a site dedicated to your patron deity.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus on Will saves against spells or spell-like abilities used by outsiders whose alignment does not match your own.

Truebond Benefit: The bonded item is considered to have your alignment, and any effects it generates have alignment aspects that match yours. Furthermore, if you have any abilities that affect your alignment-based spells (such as the Good domain), these abilities also affect the bonded item's powers. Finally, any attack made by a bonded weapon that has this benefit overcomes damage reduction of the appropriate types. For example, if you are lawful good, your bonded weapon overcomes damage reduction as if its attacks were both good and lawful.

Typical Items: This ritual can be used with any armor, shield, staff, amulet, phylactery, or vestment.

Ritual of Fire

You forge a bond with your chosen item by enduring the destructive power of a fiery conflagration.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +3.

Task: While holding the chosen item, you must voluntarily fail a saving throw against a fire spell cast by an enemy whose caster level equals or exceeds your character level. The spell must be capable of dealing damage equal to at least half your full normal hit points. You may not use any means (including spells such as *resist energy*) to protect yourself from the fire damage dealt by the spell. You need not survive the damage to complete the task.

Ceremony: Within 24 hours of completing the task, you must complete a 1-hour ceremony of prayer in front of a bonfire or similar conflagration.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus on saving throws against spells or effects with the fire descriptor.

Truebond Benefit: You gain resistance to fire 10.

Typical Items: This ritual can be used with any armor, shield, weapon, cloak, ring, or helm.

Ritual of Honor

You forge a bond with the chosen item by defeating an enemy in honorable combat.

Prerequisites: Diplomacy 6 ranks, any lawful alignment.

Task: You must challenge and defeat a creature whose Challenge Rating equals or exceeds your character level and whose Intelligence score is 3 or higher. All damage dealt to the creature must be nonlethal, and none of it may be dealt by any of your allies.

Ceremony: Within 1 hour of completing the task, you must begin a 10-minute ceremony of respect for the vanquished foe. This ceremony must conclude with the bestowal of sufficient healing (magical or otherwise) to restore the creature to consciousness.

Benefit: As long as the bonded item is stowed (not held, worn, or otherwise immediately useable), you gain a +1 bonus on initiative checks.

Truebond Benefit: You gain a +4 dodge bonus to AC against attacks of opportunity made by creatures that you have not yet attacked.

Typical Items: This ritual can be used with any weapon, armor, or shield.

Ritual of Magic

You forge a bond with the chosen item by overcoming an enemy spellcaster's magical prowess.

Prerequisite: Spellcraft 6 ranks.

Task: You must successfully counter or dispel a spell cast by an enemy whose caster level is at least 2 higher than your own.

Ceremony: Within 24 hours of completing the task, you must meditate for 8 consecutive hours without interruption.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus on caster level checks made while holding or wearing the bonded item.

Truebond Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus on saving throws against spells and spell-like abilities made while holding or wearing the item.

Typical Items: This ritual can be used with any rod, staff, wand, amulet, cloak, or robe.

Ritual of Purity

You forge a bond with the chosen item by undergoing a grueling ritual of bodily purification.

Prerequisite: Concentration 6 ranks or Autohypnosis 6 ranks (see the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*).

Task and Ceremony: You must meditate and fast for 14 consecutive days, eating no food and drinking only water. You may not use any means (either magical or mundane) to heal the nonlethal damage dealt by starvation, nor may you accept any assistance from another character in completing (or surviving) this task. The item must be in your possession during the entire process.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus on Constitution checks and Constitution-based skill checks.

Truebond Benefit: You take no penalties to Strength or Dexterity for fatigue.

Typical Items: This ritual can be used with any weapon, bracers, or cloak.

Ritual of Song

You forge a bond with the chosen item by using it to demonstrate your talent for performance. Despite its name, this ritual applies to any kind of performance, even one with no vocal components.

Prerequisite: Perform (any) 6 ranks.

Task and Ceremony: You must use Perform checks to earn at least 1% of the gp cost for imbuing the bonded item with its new ability. See the Perform skill description, page 79 of the *Player's Handbook*, for details. The item must be incorporated into each of these performances in some way—perhaps as accompaniment to a musical performance, or as a prop or costume accessory.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus on Perform checks made while holding or wearing the item.

Truebond Benefit: You can add 1 to the caster level of any spell you cast while holding or wearing the item, as long as the spell has both a verbal and a somatic component. A spell cast without either or both of these components for any reason—either because it does not require them or because it is affected by a feat such as Still Spell—does not gain this benefit.

Typical Items: This ritual can be used with any amulet, cloak, hat, instrument, or vest.

Ritual of Theft

You forge a bond with your chosen item by using it in grand larceny.

Prerequisites: Any three of the following skills (6 ranks each): Bluff, Disable Device, Hide, Move Silently, Open Lock, Search, or Sleight of Hand.

Task: You must steal one or more objects that together are worth at least as much as the gp cost of the ceremony (see below) from a foe whose Challenge Rating is at least 2 higher than your character level. The foe need not be in physical possession of the objects at the time of the theft, but he must be within 100 feet of them. You must then use your chosen item in some fashion that involves one of the same rolls or checks you made during the theft.

Ceremony: Within 1 hour of completing the task, you must give away stolen treasure whose gp value equals or exceeds the cost of imbuing the bonded item with its new abilities. Throughout the distribution of these items, you must spread tales of your skill and cunning.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus on any Open Lock check or Search check on which you take 10.

Truebond Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on any Open Lock or Search check on which you take 20, and on any Bluff, Disable Device, or Sleight of Hand check on which you take 10.

Typical Items: This ritual can be used on any boots, cloak, gloves, or container.

Ritual of Travel

You forge a bond with the chosen item by carrying it with you during a long journey.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (geography) 6 ranks or Survival 6 ranks.

Task: You must complete an overland trek of at least 50 miles per character level you possess. You can have company on this journey, but you must cover the entire distance on foot. The chosen item must accompany you throughout this task.

Ceremony: At some point during each day of travel, you must meditate for 1 hour. If this meditation is interrupted, you can begin meditating again. However, if you let an entire 24 hours pass without performing the required meditation, you must restart the journey.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus on Survival checks, as well as on all checks and saves mentioned in the description of the Endurance feat (see page 93 of the *Player's Handbook*).

Truebond Benefit: You can move at your normal speed through difficult terrain that would normally halve your speed, including undergrowth (but not heavy undergrowth), shallow bogs, steep slopes, and dense rubble. Obstacles (such as low walls), as well as any magically created difficult terrain, hamper your movement as normal.

Typical Items: This ritual can be used on any boots, cloak, or container.

MAGICAL LOCATIONS AS TREASURE

Magical locations have a rich history in the fantasy genre. The power imbued in such special places allows heroes to accomplish any number of fantastic deeds.

Locations of power can be used for various purposes within a Dungeons & Dragons campaign. Some, such as the earth nodes described in the Forgotten Realms product *Underdark*, might serve as sites for the working of especially powerful magic. Others, such as the planar touchstones described in *Planar Handbook*, might unlock potential advancement opportunities or special abilities in characters. Still others, such as the rune circles described in *Races of Stone*, could allow PCs to create permanent magical effects bound to tightly confined areas. But as compelling as those ideas are, at least one interesting concept for magical locations remains unexplored—that of a location imbued with magical power that is available for the taking.

The magical locations described in the following sections grant special abilities to qualified characters who brave their particular dangers. Although the prerequisites for these abilities are matched to the character types that most directly and easily benefit from them, almost any character can qualify for a magical location's power. Most of the locations described below confer abilities that are usable only for a specified period, or come with a specific number of uses. All the abilities reflect the nature of the locations from which they originate in some manner.

Unlike magic items, magical locations never occur as part of random treasures. They appear only when you place them within the campaign. Therefore, you decide whether

or not they are within reach of the PCs. If you wish, you can allow a character created at a level higher than 1st to include one or more special abilities granted by a magical location in his overall wealth. Such powers, however, are even more subject to DM approval than are magic items the character carries.

PLACING MAGICAL LOCATIONS

You have the final say about where, when, and how magical locations occur within your campaign, just as you control access to magic items by determining which ones are for sale in any given city or shop. Because the various types of magical locations serve different purposes and operate under different rules, it is perfectly acceptable (perhaps even compelling) to combine more than one kind in the same adventure site. For example, a dwarf citadel could house an earth node (from the *Underdark* supplement), a rune circle (from *Races of Stone*), and one of the magical locations described here. The presence of these three sites might result from the nature of the stronghold or the influence of its powerful dwarf mages and clerics, or it might have been the reason that the dwarves settled the area in the first place.

Magical locations offer nearly limitless potential for adventuring. Because they are for the most part immobile (though one or two, such as the *terrible cyst*, move from time to time), they contrast well with the equally sought after but highly portable magic items that spur so many heroic quests.

NATURE OF MAGICAL LOCATIONS

In general, a magical location can be suppressed (by *dispel magic*), or even disjoined (by *Mordenkainen's disjunction*), as if it were a magic item containing a spell of caster level 10th with an object Will save bonus of +15. Such a site is metaphysically tied to its area, so destroying buildings, walls, or other physical structures in and around the location does not eliminate its ability to confer its power.

Unless otherwise specified, no creature can gain the benefit of a magical location's conferred power more than once. Even if the power has limited uses or a fixed duration, a character cannot regain it by returning to the magical location after it expires. Furthermore, once a location has conferred its ability on a character, it must recharge its power for a specified period of time (generally 1 day to 1 year, depending on the location) before it can do so again.

However, if the creature on which a magical location has conferred its an ability dies, the location is instantly recharged and can confer its ability again immediately, no matter how much recharge time remains. A location that can confer its ability on more than one creature before needing to recharge can be renewed early only if all those who currently enjoy the ability die. If the conferred ability has a duration shorter than the required recharge period, the creature's death still recharges the location immediately, even if the creature can no longer use the ability.

MAGICAL LOCATION DESCRIPTIONS

The magical locations described below are presented in the following format.

Name of Magical Location

The entry begins with a description of the location in plain language.

Lore: This portion of the description provides any information available to characters about the location, along with the relevant Knowledge DCs necessary to acquire it. Bardic knowledge checks can be substituted for any of these checks at the same DCs.

Description: The first paragraph offers a physical description of the location, written in simple, declarative style. The second paragraph, if present, includes more details about the place (including sounds, smells, and tactile sensations) and details how its magical effect or special ability looks once it's in effect.

Prerequisite: The prerequisites needed to gain the magical location's special ability are detailed here. In addition to meeting these prerequisites, a character must visit the location physically to have any chance of acquiring the special ability it confers.

Location Activation: These paragraphs describe the rules for acquiring and using the special ability that the location bestows. Any command words or activities needed to activate the location's power are also noted here.

Recharge: The time needed for the location to recharge is given in this section.

Special Ability: This entry describes the special ability conferred and gives the rules for using it.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: MAGICAL LOCATIONS AS TREASURE

Utilizing magical locations as treasure is a great way to provide characters with a new and interesting alternative reward instead of still another *+1 longsword.* Since magical locations are supplements to regular treasure, each is assigned a gp value, so that its benefits can be directly substituted for treasure that characters would otherwise receive. For instance, if overcoming a particular challenge normally calls for a treasure reward of 5,000 gp, you could substitute a *dragonheart tomb* (see page 238) whose power affects two PCs (a 2,000 gp value) for part of that amount and award only 3,000 gp worth of standard treasure. Other types of locations, such as touchstones or earth nodes, confer powers that require a character to give up a feat slot or pay some other cost to gain their benefits, so they are not considered to be treasure.

Duration: This section gives the ability's duration or number of uses.

Aura: This line describes the type of magical aura that surrounds the location.

Ability Value: This entry is the gp value of the conferred ability. (These figures are summarized on Table 7–2.) Although these abilities can never be bought or sold, their gp values are provided so that you can track treasure values. You can then substitute these abilities for treasure value on a one-for-one basis, and also track them as part of overall character wealth by adding their values to the value of the character's equipment (see Table 5–1: Character Wealth by Level, page 135 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Table 7–2: Magical Location Values

Location	Value
Watchpost of vigilance	1,500 gp
Altar of the dreamwalker	2,000 gp
Dragonheart tomb	2,000 gp
Heart of stone	2,000 gp
Heart of wind	2,000 gp
Terrible cyst	2,500 gp
Heart of flame	3,000 gp
Heart of ice	3,000 gp
Necropolis of dread	3,000 gp
Footsteps of Corellon	4,000 gp
Ember of dragonfire	8,000 gp
Garden of nature's rage	8,000 gp
Spellward of arcane might	9,000 gp
Everflame	10,000 gp
Last Stand of the Ironsworn	10,000 gp
Pool of frozen souls	10,000 gp
Shrine of the weaponmaster	10,000 gp

ALTAR OF THE DREAMWALKER

The *altar of the dreamwalker* is a location imbued with the pure essence of dreams. Some sources maintain that it was formed by great arcane magic; others insist that it gained its power from the presence of powerful fey creatures who held sway over dreams. Still others claim that it formed spontaneously as a manifestation of some unknown connection between the physical world and the realm of dreams.

Whatever its origin, the altar grants intelligent creatures that spend sufficient time in its presence a limited ability to communicate through dreams. An *altar of the dreamwalker* can form in nearly any terrain or location, but it generally appears in a sylvan glade with a large stump or felled tree of great age that serves as the center of its magic. Over time, the magic of the altar works subtle changes on the nearby terrain, causing plants to flourish and infusing the air with a thin but ever-present mist. Those who visit it are aware of a certain freshness in the air and an unmistakable feeling of growth and life.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about an *altar of the dreamwalker* by making Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (nature) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 15: An *altar of the dreamwalker* is a magical location imbued with the power of dreams.

DC 20: Intelligent creatures that rest within the glade of an *altar of the dreamwalker* gain an effective but fleeting ability to communicate through their dreams.

DC 25: An *altar of the dreamwalker* is somehow bound to the magic of the fey as well as to the magic of of dreams, but little is known about this obscure connection.

Description: The glade in which an *altar of the dreamwalker* stands is peaceful and serene. Lush grass covers the ground between healthy trees of great age. In the center of a small clearing, the ancient, moss-covered remains of a long-fallen tree offer silent testimony to the age of the place. All its vegetation, from grass to shrubs to ancient trees, seems flush with life and unusually hale.

The fresh scents of wildflowers deepen the sense of peace in the glade, and even the sounds of the forest seem distant and muted near the altar.

SWIFT AND IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

The *Miniatures Handbook* introduced the concept of a new action type: the swift action. Likewise, the *Expanded Psionics Handbook* introduced another new action type: the immediate action. Some of the magical locations, armor and weapon special abilities, and other features of *Dungeon Master's Guide II* use these concepts. A description of how they work follows.

Swift Action: A swift action consumes a very small amount of time, but represents a larger expenditure of effort and energy than a free action. You can perform one swift action per turn without affecting your ability to perform other actions. In that regard, a swift action is like a free action. However, you can perform only a single swift action per turn, regardless of what other actions you take. You can take a swift action any time you would normally be allowed to take a free action. Swift actions usually involve magic or psionics, or the activation of magic or psionic items; many characters (especially those who don't use magic or psionics) never have an opportunity to take a swift action.

Casting a quickened spell or manifesting a quickened power is a swift action. In addition, casting any spell or manifesting any power with a casting time or manifesting time of 1 swift action (such as *earth hammer*) is a swift action.

Casting a spell or manifesting a power with a casting or manifesting time of 1 swift action does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Immediate Action: Much like a swift action, an immediate action consumes a very small amount of time, but represents a larger expenditure of effort and energy than a free action. Unlike a swift action, an immediate action can be performed at any time—even if it's not your turn. Using an immediate action on your turn is the same as using a swift action, and counts as your swift action for that turn. You cannot use another immediate action or a swift action until after your next turn if you have used an immediate action when it is not currently your turn (effectively, using an immediate action before your turn is equivalent to using your swift action for the coming turn). You also cannot use an immediate action if you are currently flat-footed.

Prerequisite: An *altar of the dreamwalker* confers its special ability only on a creature with an Intelligence score of 8 or higher.

Location Activation: To gain the ability conferred by an *altar of the dreamwalker*, a qualified creature must spend 8 hours in uninterrupted rest within 20 feet of the central stump or tree. Ethereal creatures cannot approach within 30 feet of it, and any effect that would cause a creature within this radius to become ethereal automatically fails.

Small communities of mystics occasionally gather for years around an *altar of the dreamwalker* to study the magic of dreams and the power of the altar.

An *altar of the dreamwalker* grants the *dream* ability to only one creature at a time. If multiple qualified creatures are present simultaneously, only one (selected at random) gains the power.

Recharge: Once it has granted a creature the *dream* ability, an altar cannot do so again for 24 hours.

Special Ability (Sp): An *altar of the dreamwalker* grants the ability to use *dream* (caster level equals creature's character level) as a spell-like ability once during the next 24-hour period. If not used within that timeframe, the ability is lost.

Duration: A creature that uses the ability and then spends another 8 hours resting within the required radius of the altar regains the ability as soon as the altar has recharged (24 hours after gaining it the first time). The creature can continue this process for as long as desired, regaining the ability each day, so long as it does not leave the area of the altar. Once it passes beyond the 20-foot radius of the altar's power, it can never again gain the ability.

Aura: Moderate illusion.

Ability Value: 2,000 gp.

DRAGONHEART TOMB

When a great dragon dies while using powerful necromantic magic underground, the place of its death might be imbued with mighty arcane energies that convert it into a *dragonheart tomb*. Characters skilled in necromantic magic can sometimes claim some of the latent power of such a site for themselves.

Dragonheart tombs occur only underground. Over time, the magic inherent in such locations shifts and warps the terrain within the immediate area, withering any vegetation, darkening the stone, and decaying any natural substances. Creatures entering such an area become aware of an unnerving chill in the air.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *dragonheart tomb* by making Knowledge (arcana) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 10: A *dragonheart tomb* results from the death of a great dragon.

DC 15: A *dragonheart tomb* forms only when a great dragon dies while using or affected by powerful necromantic magic.

DC 20: Each such location holds tremendous necromantic power that can be drawn forth and used to augment necromantic spells.

DC 25: A *dragonheart tomb* is always watched and guarded—not just by those who seek to harvest its power for themselves, but also by those who seek to prevent the spread of necromancy.

Description: A *dragonheart tomb* is a vast, expansive, foreboding cavern. Its rough floors are sloped and jagged, and the ceiling has a wealth of stalactites, clefts, and other uneven features. The immense bones of a great dragon, lying inanimate in the center of the cavern, are the most striking features of the tomb.

The cavern seems perpetually dim, and although light sources function normally within it, an impression of darkness still remains. Any illumination seems temporary and somehow fragile, as if the tomb were just waiting to return to its natural state of darkness. The air within a *dragonheart tomb* also has an unnatural chill, which many liken to the presence of death. Although the creeping darkness and seeping cold produce no tangible effects, creatures find their stay within a *dragonheart tomb* both unnerving and unpleasant.

Prerequisite: To gain the benefits of a *dragonheart tomb*, a creature must be able to cast at least one 2nd-level or higher necromancy spell.

Location Activation: A qualified spellcaster can sense the lingering power of a *dragonheart tomb* and claim a small shard of it by spending a full-round action within its confines. A *dragonheart tomb* holds enough power to boost the spellcasting ability of up to two qualified creatures simultaneously.

Recharge: After a *dragonheart tomb* has conferred its ability twice, it cannot grant its power again for one full year.

Special Ability (Ex): A spellcaster who draws forth the power of a *dragonheart tomb* has an effective +1 caster level for all necromancy spells.

Duration: The increased caster level lasts for one year.

Aura: Strong necromancy.

Ability Value: 2,000 gp (1,000 gp per creature affected).

EMBER OF DRAGONFIRE

When a fire-breathing dragon uses its breath weapon to destroy other powerful creatures, the site of the battle might become an *ember of dragonfire*. Imbued with the dragon's magical fire, the souls of the destroyed creatures are bound into the ground where they died. This contained dragonfire causes the entire area to glow with an unsettling heat, which serves to mark the location as magical, although it causes no physical harm. While

the magic of the dragonfire remains active, the affected area also glows with a dim, reddish light reminiscent of a dimly glowing ember.

An *ember of dragonfire* can form anywhere that a powerful creature dies in the flames of a dragon's breath. But such sites are still quite rare, even when powerful dragons are present. Even a great wyrm red dragon might die of old age without ever causing the formation of such a site.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about an *ember of dragonfire* by making Knowledge (arcana) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 10: An *ember of dragonfire* is a magical site that holds the essence of a dragon's fiery breath.

DC 15: Embers of dragonfire are sometimes created when powerful creatures succumb to a dragon's fiery breath.

DC 20: Embers of dragonfire allow certain creatures to capture the essence of the dragon's fire within themselves and breathe it out again, just like a dragon can.

Description: Because they form in a wide variety of locations and under various conditions, *embers of dragonfire* tend to have few physical characteristics in common. The only constants are the heat that pervades the area and a faint red glow in the area of the original embers.

Prerequisite: Only a creature with more than three character levels can sense and access the power of an *ember of dragonfire*.

Location Activation: Any qualified creature that enters the site senses the burning energy that suffuses it. By spending a full-round action within the confines of the ember, the creature takes this latent power into itself. If the creature is unintelligent, it instinctively draws forth the power of the site unless directly threatened by combat.

Recharge: Once an *ember of dragonfire* has conferred its power upon a single creature, it cannot do so again for one year.

Special Ability (Su): A creature empowered by an *ember of dragonfire* can breathe a 30-foot cone of fire once per day. Every creature within the cone takes 6d8 points of fire damage, though a successful Reflex save (DC 10 + 1/2 empowered creature's HD + empowered creature's Con modifier) halves the damage. A creature gains this ability in addition to any breath weapon or similar ability that it might already have.

Duration: The ability to breathe fire lasts for 30 days.

Aura: Strong evocation.

Ability Value: 8,000 gp.

EVERFLAME

When a gate or portal to the Elemental Plane of Fire remains open for several centuries, a small area around it can become imbued with the magic of *everflame*. Such a location holds the magical essence of fire within it, and creatures of sufficient power sometimes draw this power into themselves, gaining resistance to fiery spells and effects.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about an *everflame* by making Knowledge (the planes) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 10: An *everflame* is a remnant of a long-standing connection to the Elemental Plane of Fire that holds the essence of that fiery realm.

DC 15: Those who withstand the fires of an *everflame* can resist the effects of any fire.

DC 20: Anyone who stands within an *everflame* can draw a small portion of its magic into himself and gain significant resistance to fire damage.

Description: An area imbued with the power of an *everflame* is perpetually afire. Its flames burn creatures and objects brought into contact with them, but they do not spread, nor do they burn more than a few yards of the surrounding area. Because an *everflame* is found only where a gate to the Elemental Plane of Fire has long existed, it typically occurs near some natural source of fire or heat. For example, an *everflame* might be found on a rocky island floating in lava, at the heart of a vast, scorching desert, or in some other such fearsomely hot location.

Prerequisite: Only a creature with at least five character levels can access the power of an *everflame*, and then only if it possesses no special ability that would lessen the damage it takes from fire.

Location Activation: The fires of an *everflame* occupy a 15-foot-radius, circular area and provide flickering illumination to a distance of 15 feet beyond that in every direction. This magical fire deals 2d6 points of fire damage per round to any creature in contact with it.

To gain the benefit of an *everflame*, a qualified creature must stand unprotected within its confines for at least 3 rounds. Each incarnation of an *everflame* affects only five creatures at a time. If more than five creatures qualify for the benefit at once, only five of them (chosen randomly) gain it.

Recharge: Once an *everflame* has conferred its benefits on five creatures, it cannot confer them again for one year.

Special Ability (Ex): A qualified creature gains resistance to fire 5. A creature that already has resistance to fire from another source (even a temporary one, such as a spell or item) gains nothing from an *everflame*. A creature can gain this benefit only once, and its effects do not stack with any other resistance to fire the creature might subsequently gain.

Duration: The resistance to fire lasts for one year.

Aura: Strong abjuration and evocation.

Ability Value: 10,000 gp (2,000 gp per affected creature).

FOOTSTEPS OF CORELLON

Throughout the long history of his people, the great elf deity Corellon Larethian has performed many wondrous deeds. Although he is a being of great peace and wisdom, Corellon Larethian has at times been forced to pit his

own immense power against the foes of the elves in direct combat. In a few such battles, the divine might that Corellon exerted has forever altered the landscape around the site.

Such locations, which are known as *footsteps of Corellon*, are imbued with shards of the deity's power. When discovered, these sites become sacred to the elves, who visit them in pilgrimages. In rare instances, such a location might yield up some of its intrinsic power to a worthy elf, granting her the ability to deliver terrible attacks with a ranged weapon. Sometimes a community that knows of a nearby footstep selects its fittest and most deserving elves and bids them race to the location. The elf who arrives first gains the benefit of the site and proves both her athletic prowess and her devotion to Corellon.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *footstep of Corellon* by making Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (religion) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 10 (history or religion): The *footsteps of Corellon* are sites where Corellon Larethian took up weapons against the foes of the elves.

DC 15 (history): Footsteps of Corellon are not formed every time Corellon comes to the Material Plane. They form only when he expends a great deal of his own power there.

DC 15 (religion): On rare occasions, *footsteps of Corellon* are imbued with some of the deity's divine power, and powerful elves benefit from exposure to them.

DC 20 (religion): An elf who journeys to one of the *footsteps of Corellon* and meditates there gains the ability to make powerful ranged smite attacks.

DC 35 (history or religion): A successful check at this level allows the character to learn or recall a clue to the location of a *footstep of Corellon*.

Description: *Footsteps of Corellon* differ greatly in appearance, since their physical attributes are determined more by where the struggle took place than by any action on the part of Corellon. *Footsteps of Corellon* have been found in stark mountain passes, deep underground grottos, and various other strange locations in which the great elf deity brought his power to bear against an enemy of his people.

Regardless of their physical appearance, these sites are filled with a sense of peace and purpose. Any intelligent creatures that enter the area perceive this intangible quality, but it seems particularly palpable to elves of good alignment.

Prerequisite: Only a good-aligned elf with at least five character levels can gain the power granted by a *footstep of Corellon*.

Location Activation: To gain the benefit of a *footstep of Corellon*, a character must meditate uninterrupted for 1 hour within its confines. If this meditation is interrupted, the character can begin again.

Recharge: Once a given footstep has bestowed its power on a single elf, it cannot do so again for five years. This long recharge time makes the power a particular prize for the discoverer of such a site or the winner of a race to it.

Special Ability (Su): A *footstep of Corellon* grants the ability to make one ranged smite attack each day with a thrown weapon or projectile weapon. On a successful attack, a bonus equal to the elf's character level (maximum +20) applies to his damage roll. This smite ability can be used against any creature within 30 feet that the elf considers a foe. He must declare that he is using the smite ability before making the attack roll. If the attack misses or if the target is farther than 30 feet away, the smite has no effect, and its use is lost for the day.

Duration: Any elf who receives the smite ability retains it for 30 days.

Aura: Strong transmutation.

Variants: If the elf deity Corellon Larethian is not included in your campaign's pantheon, you can easily associate the *footsteps of Corellon* with some other deity that plays a similar role in your campaign. You can even change the elven flavor of these sites by choosing a nonelf deity known for archery. If you change the deity, however, you must also alter the name of the magical location.

Ability Value: 4,000 gp.

GARDEN OF NATURE'S RAGE

Filled with the raw, unknowable force of nature itself, a *garden of nature's rage* is a wellspring of power that is overlooked by those who delve into the mysteries of the arcane or master the rituals of the divine. In these few rare places, the raw anger of nature manifests and pours directly into the servants and defenders of wild places, increasing their power dramatically. Certain powerful druids can draw the power of a *garden of nature's rage* into themselves to make their wild shaped forms more powerful in combat.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *garden of nature's rage* by making Knowledge (nature) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 15: Gardens of nature's rage are wild, powerful places filled with the pure essence of nature's might. Their power is connected in some way with the powers of the druid orders.

DC 20: A druid who roams a *garden of nature's rage* gains some special enhancement to his druid abilities.

DC 25: A high-level druid who successfully bonds with a *garden of nature's rage* draws some of its power into herself. After this process is complete, she uses this power to enhance her physical prowess while in wild shape.

DC 35: A successful check at this level allows the character to learn or recall a clue to the location of a *garden of nature's rage*.

Description: A *garden of nature's rage* is always a wild and untracked stretch of wilderness. It can occupy an area as small as a few miles across in each direction, or as vast as an entire

continent. Regardless of its size, the garden is filled with lush and healthy plant life, wild and powerful animals, and a variety of fey creatures. The animals in a *garden of nature's rage* grow larger and stronger than others of their kind, and dire animals frequently prowl these magical sites.

The sounds of nature fill a *garden of nature's rage*. Massive dire animals crash through dense vegetation and underbrush in search of prey, while smaller animals clamor and call to one another.

A druid who claims the power granted by a *garden of nature's rage* takes on a feral and twisted appearance when in wild shape. For example, she might have longer, more vicious fangs and a feral cast to her features in the form of a dire wolf, or jagged stone spikes protruding from her body in earth elemental form. Her normal form is unaffected except for a gleam of power in her eyes.

Prerequisite: Only a 5th-level or higher druid can access the power contained within a *garden of nature's rage*.

Location Activation: To claim the power of a *garden of nature's rage*, a qualified druid must roam the area for one week, living off the land and sleeping in the open. Her animal companion can accompany her, but otherwise she must undertake the ordeal alone. While wandering the garden, the druid uses her spells and abilities normally, but she must befriend and aid the natural creatures she encounters and fight only against those who would do harm to the natural world.

Recharge: Once it has granted its ability to a single druid, a garden cannot do so again for one year.

Special Ability (Ex): Once per day, when the druid assumes a new form through the use of her wild shape ability, she gains a +4 enhancement bonus to Strength and Constitution. These increases last as long as the druid maintains the wild shape. She decides whether or not to use this ability upon activating her wild shape.

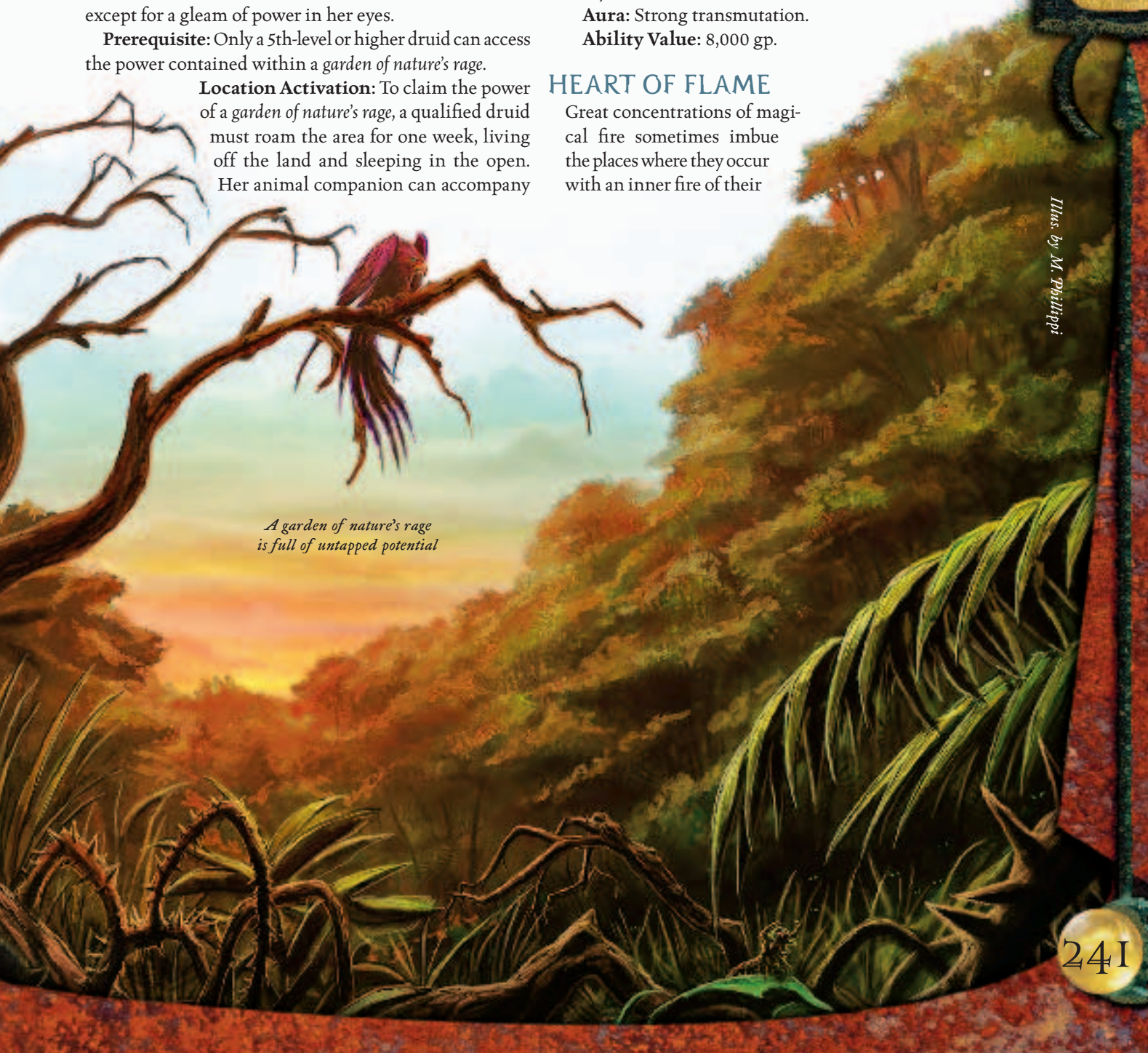
Duration: The enhanced wild shape ability lasts for one year.

Aura: Strong transmutation.

Ability Value: 8,000 gp.

HEART OF FLAME

Great concentrations of magical fire sometimes imbue the places where they occur with an inner fire of their



A garden of nature's rage is full of untapped potential

Illus. by M. Phillippi

own. These locations, known as *hearts of flame,* form from large outpourings of magical fire, the presence of several extremely powerful fire elementals, or even the opening of a gate or portal to the Elemental Plane of Fire. Despite the fact that they arise from a variety of sources, *hearts of flame* are extremely rare.

Since magical fire touches almost any sort of place, *hearts of flame* vary considerably in appearance and location. One might be a cave whose dark stone walls seem to flicker with buried fire; another could be a forest glade that somehow radiates heat and light without producing actual flame. Whatever their outward nature, however, all such places draw their power from the purest essence of magical fire.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *heart of flame* by making Knowledge (arcana) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 15: A *heart of flame* is a mystical location imbued with the purest essence of fire.

DC 20: The magical essence of fire contained in locations known as *hearts of flame* somehow augments fire-based magic.

DC 25: Spellcasters of sufficient skill who journey to a *heart of flame* can pull some of this power into themselves to increase the power of their fire spells.

Description: Though *hearts of flame* vary greatly in appearance, all have some similar characteristics. Such a site always seems unusually warm, and the ambient temperature is never lower than 70° Fahrenheit. If the normal ambient temperature of the surrounding area is higher than 70°, the temperature within the *heart of flame* is warmer still—usually at least 10° to 15° above the norm. In addition, the entire area glows dimly with a red, flickering light, as if unseen flames were reflecting off the walls, the ground, or even nearby creatures. This flickering light provides dim illumination throughout a *heart of flame.*

Flames seem to spring from the body of any spellcaster who has successfully drawn power from a *heart of flame* whenever she casts a spell with the fire descriptor. But although this fiery nimbus looks impressive, it deals no damage of any kind.

Prerequisite: Only a 5th-level or higher spellcaster can access the power contained within a *heart of flame.*

Location Activation: To claim the power of a *heart of flame,* a qualified spellcaster must stand within its confines and draw its power into herself by force of will. Doing so requires a full-round action and provokes attacks of opportunity.

Recharge: Once a *heart of flame* has conferred its ability on a single spellcaster, it cannot do so again for one year.

Special Ability (Su): A spellcaster who draws forth the power from a *heart of flame* has an effective +1 caster level for all spells with the fire descriptor.

Duration: The conferred ability lasts for one year.
Aura: Strong evocation.
Ability Value: 3,000 gp.

HEART OF ICE

In a manner similar to its antithesis, the *heart of flame,* a *heart of ice* is a place imbued with the magical power of cold. A *heart of ice* results from the death of a powerful being with the cold subtype, the presence of powerful cold magic, or a long-open gate or portal to a plane of great cold. Despite the fact that they arise from a variety of sources, *hearts of ice* are extremely rare.

Since magical cold touches almost any sort of place, *hearts of ice* vary considerably in appearance. Most are in arctic climes, hidden away in deep crevasses or ice caves of great size and awe-inspiring beauty. Regardless of its other characteristics, however, a *heart of ice* is always frigid. Stones, vegetation and objects within its confines quickly become rimmed with frost, the air is uncomfortably cold, and the ground is slippery with ice.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *heart of ice* by making Knowledge (arcana) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 15: A *heart of ice* is a mystical location imbued with the purest essence of cold.

DC 20: The magical essence of cold contained in locations known as *hearts of ice* somehow augments cold-based magic.

DC 25: Spellcasters of sufficient skill who journey to a *heart of ice* can pull some of this power into themselves to increase the power of their cold spells.

Description: Though *hearts of ice* vary greatly in appearance, all have some similar characteristics. Such a site always seems unusually chilly, and the ambient temperature is never higher than 40° Fahrenheit. If the normal ambient temperature of the surrounding area is lower than 40°, the temperature within a *heart of ice* is cooler still—usually at least 10° to 15° below the norm. In addition, the entire area glows dimly with a dull, blue radiance, which provides dim illumination throughout a *heart of ice.* The air in such a place is always crisp and clean.

The air around any spellcaster who has successfully drawn power from a *heart of ice* drops a few degrees in temperature and takes on a crisp, icy clarity whenever he casts a spell with the cold descriptor. This inherent coolness deals no damage of any kind.

Prerequisite: Only a 5th-level or higher spellcaster can access the power contained within a *heart of ice.*

Location Activation: To claim the power of a *heart of ice,* a qualified spellcaster must stand within its confines and draw its power into himself by force of will. Doing so requires a full-round action and provokes attacks of opportunity.

Recharge: Once a *heart of ice* has conferred its ability on a single spellcaster, it cannot do so again for one year.

Special Ability (Su): A spellcaster who draws forth the power from a *heart of ice* has an effective +1 caster level for all spells with the cold descriptor.

Duration: The conferred ability lasts for one year.

Aura: Strong evocation.

Ability Value: 3,000 gp.

HEART OF STONE

Hearts of stone always form underground, in spots where strange and wondrous events have occurred. These rocky caverns might form around a powerful concentration of earth magic (such as the earth nodes described in the FORGOTTEN REALMS supplement *Underdark*), but more often they result from powerful earth-based spells, the presence of several earth elementals, or a gate to the Elemental Plane of Earth.

Although they look like normal caverns, the closed-in spaces that make up a *heart of stone* are filled with the unadulterated power of the earth. Most creatures that visit such a spot know that it is a special location, even if they cannot identify its exact nature.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *heart of stone* by making Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (dungeoneering) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 15 (arcana): A *heart of stone* is a mystical location imbued with the purest essence of elemental earth.

DC 20 (arcana): The magical essence of stone contained in locations known as *hearts of stone* somehow augments abjuration magic.

DC 25 (arcana): Spellcasters of sufficient skill who journey to a *heart of stone* can pull some of this power into themselves to increase the power of their abjuration spells.

DC 35 (dungeoneering): Each *heart of stone* consists of only one kind of rock. The area around such a location can sometimes be identified by the unusual purity of its stone.

Description: *Hearts of stone* are always found underground. Though they vary greatly in location, size, and appearance, one common feature sets them apart from natural stone formations: Each *heart of stone* is composed of only one kind of stone or mineral, as are the areas in its immediate vicinity. This uniformity occasionally helps a skilled dungeoneer find these rare locations.

Any creature affected by a spell that has been augmented by the power of a *heart of stone* takes on a vaguely crystalline appearance. The edges and ridges of its form are sharper than normal, as though the creature's body had been carved from crystal. This change in appearance is merely cosmetic and lasts only as long as the spell's effects do.

Prerequisite: Only a 5th-level or higher spellcaster can access the power contained within a *heart of stone*.

Location Activation: To claim the power of a *heart of stone*, a qualified spellcaster must stand within its confines and draw its power into herself by force of will. Doing so requires a full-round action and provokes attacks of opportunity.

Recharge: Once a *heart of stone* has conferred its ability on a single spellcaster, it cannot do so again for one year.

Special Ability (Sp): A spellcaster who draws forth the power from a *heart of stone* channels spell energy into damage reduction. He casts a particular spell from the school of abjuration, but instead of benefiting from the spell normally, he gains damage reduction equal to twice its spell level with respect to adamantine. The ability can be used once per day and lasts for up to 10 minutes. The damage reduction can be dispelled as if it were a separate spell cast by the spellcaster.

Duration: The conferred ability lasts for one year.

Aura: Strong abjuration.

Ability Value: 2,000 gp.

HEART OF WIND

In a manner similar to its antithesis, the *heart of stone*, a *heart of wind* is a place imbued with the magical power of elemental air. A *heart of wind* results from the presence of several powerful air elementals, the use of great air-based magic, or even the opening of a gate or portal to the Elemental Plane of Air. Despite the fact that they arise from a variety of sources, *hearts of wind* are extremely rare.

A *heart of wind* forms in nearly any kind of place—even deep underground. Typically, however, it forms high above the ground's surface—either at the peak of a great mountain, or suspended in the air high above an open plain. A strong wind blows constantly through a *heart of wind*, though its direction and exact strength might change from time to time.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *heart of wind* by making Knowledge (arcana) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 15: A *heart of wind* is a mystical location imbued with the purest essence of elemental air.

DC 20: The magical essence of elemental air contained in locations known as *hearts of wind* somehow augments the use of magic.

DC 25: Spellcasters of sufficient skill who journey to a *heart of wind* can pull some of this power into themselves to gain the ability to cast spells normally delivered by touch as ranged effects.

Description: *Hearts of wind* are typically located so high above the ground that even normal flying creatures have difficulty reaching them. But air elementals, djinn, and other creatures of elemental air do not share this difficulty in attaining the extreme altitudes at which a *heart of wind*

is usually found. In addition to the difficulties imposed by the altitude, those seeking a *heart of wind* must deal with the fact that it is made out of air and nothing else. *See invisibility, true seeing,* and similar spells are of no help in locating a *heart of wind,* but a Spot check (DC 50, reduced as appropriate for distance) reveals it.

Unlike most other magical locations, *hearts of wind* are mobile, and they tend to act like bubbles of pure, magically charged air moving through the upper reaches of the atmosphere. Thus, finding one usually requires both powerful divinatory magic and a great deal of luck. A few such locations are stationary, and occasionally one moves slowly enough that a determined searcher can learn relevant clues about its location. The more mobile *hearts of wind,* however, leave no traces of their passage and are impossible to locate if they are not within range of a divination spell.

A fierce gust of wind jostles the hair and clothes of a spellcaster who has successfully drawn power from a *heart of wind* whenever she casts a touch spell at range (see Special Ability, below). Although this breeze is not strong enough to adversely affect the spellcaster or other creatures, all those nearby hear and feel the rushing of air.

Prerequisite: Only a 5th-level or higher spellcaster can access the power contained within a *heart of wind.*

Location Activation: To claim the power of a *heart of wind,* a qualified spellcaster must stand within its confines and draw its power into himself by force of will. Doing so requires a full-round action and provokes attacks of opportunity.

Recharge: Once a *heart of wind* has conferred its ability on a single spellcaster, it cannot do so again for one year.

Special Ability (Su): A spellcaster who draws forth the power of a *heart of wind* uses touch spells at range. Once per day, she treats the range of any touch spell of 3rd level or lower as if it were 30 feet. The spell affects the target normally, just as if the spellcaster had made a successful melee touch attack. If the spell actually is used as an attack (that is, against a foe), the spellcaster must succeed on a ranged touch attack instead of the melee touch attack that would normally be required. This ability has no effect on spells whose ranges are other than touch.

Duration: The conferred ability lasts for 30 days.

Aura: Strong transmutation.

Ability Value: 2,000 gp.

LAST STAND OF THE IRONSWORN

Centuries ago, a group of powerful dwarf warriors was given a desperate mission—to hold the underground passage leading to a great dwarf city against an encroaching horde of hobgoblins and bugbears while the city was evacuated. When the intrepid band of dwarves beheld the onrushing foes, they knew that their chances of holding out long enough for all their fellows to escape were vanishingly small. Looking to one another for courage, the dwarves swore a powerful joint oath to hold the passage—not for the safety of the city and not for their own honor, but for the brotherhood they had built among themselves.

Against all expectations, the Brotherhood of the Ironsworn held the evil humanoids at bay for three entire days. Only when word came that the last dwarf was safely away from the city's gates did the remaining Ironsworn finally fall. Because of the Ironsworn's devotion and extreme heroism, the spot where they made their last stand gained mystical powers of its own.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about the *Last Stand of the Ironsworn* by making Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (arcana) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 15 (history): The *Last Stand of the Ironsworn* is a dwarven legend about a group of warriors who held off a large horde of humanoids bent on attacking a city.

DC 25 (history): The *Last Stand of the Ironsworn* is one of the greatest tales of dwarven military might, and the site of these heroic dwarves' last stand is said to have magical powers.

DC 25 (arcana): The *Last Stand of the Ironsworn* is an obscure magical location that allows groups of good-aligned heroes to swear a powerful oath of mutual protection.

Description: The Ironsworn made their final stand just inside the gates of their great underground city. A grand passage, once lined with the artistry of proud dwarven craftsmen, leads to a gaping hole more than 40 feet high and nearly as wide. Beyond this gap lie the ruins of the great city itself. Once, a magnificent pair of adamantine doors kept unwelcome visitors out, but the same great forces that shattered the Ironsworn's might pulled these gates down and used the adamantine as raw material for several powerful magic weapons and suits of armor.

The skin of creatures bound to the power of the Ironsworn gains a vaguely metallic sheen when they call upon the bond they share. This change in appearance provides subtle but noticeable visual evidence of the Ironsworn's magic.

Prerequisite: Only a group of good-aligned allies who stand together at the site of the Ironsworn's last stand can draw the power from this unique magical location.

Location Activation: To claim the power of the *Last Stand of the Ironsworn,* a group of good-aligned allies must stand together at the site and forever bond themselves as comrades in arms. The magic of the location, enhanced and made manifest by the devotion and courage of the Ironsworn, grants the group a greater than normal ability to stand together against foes.

Illus. by B. Hagan

The Last Stand of the Ironsworn

Recharge: Once it has conferred its power on a group of up to five allies, the *Last Stand of the Ironsworn* cannot grant the ability again for one year. Most DMs link the number of creatures that the *Last Stand of the Ironsworn* can affect to the number of characters adventuring together, so that no player feels excluded from the benefits. This option also creates a game mechanic that reinforces the party's natural desire to continue adventuring together.

Special Ability (Su): Once per day, a group of allied creatures that have stood together at the *Last Stand of the Ironsworn* can call upon the power of the site. To do so, one of them must spend a standard action yelling, "Remember the Ironsworn!" Each ally within 30 feet of another ally immediately gains a number of temporary hit points equal to twice the number of eligible allies. These temporary hit points last for up to 1 hour. For example, if a group of five heroes who have stood together at the *Last Stand of the Ironsworn* are all within 30 feet of each other, and one of them spends a standard action to call forth the site's power, each gains 10 temporary hit points that last for up to 1 hour.

Duration: The conferred power lasts for one month. It ends prematurely for all creatures in the group if any of the allies who stood together at the *Last Stand of the Ironsworn* dies before that time.

Aura: Strong transmutation.

Variants: Unlike other locations described in this section, the *Last Stand of the Ironsworn* carries its own specific history. However, a DM wishing to use the abilities of the *Last Stand of the Ironsworn* in another way can easily change the details of this history. Warriors of another race, nation, or affiliation could easily provide the impetus for such a magical location at any site where they made a desperate last stand against overwhelming odds. Simply changing the name and back story of the location allows you to place the magical effects in any area of your campaign world.

Ability Value: 10,000 gp (2,000 gp per affected creature).

NECROPOLIS OF DREAD

A *necropolis of dread* is a dark and twisted grave site that seems to draw all light into itself. Its lusterless black walls and pale bones create a gloom-filled impression of death and hopelessness. These rare sites usually result from strong necromantic magic, the creation of powerful undead, or massive slaughter in the name of some evil power. Whatever its location, the landscape within a

necropolis of dread is forever changed, and never again does the area feel clean or wholesome to living creatures.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *necropolis of dread* by making Knowledge (religion) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 15: A *necropolis of dread* is a magical gravesite full of unknowable terrors.

DC 20: A *necropolis of dread* grants some of its fearsome power to any skilled necromancer who manages to brave its horrors.

DC 25: A necromancer who masters the power of a *necropolis of dread* casts fear-inducing magic with greater facility. In addition, creatures that brave the necropolis are more resistant to other fear-inducing effects, even if they have no ability with necromancy or fear-inducing magic.

Description: A *necropolis of dread* is as dark and fearsome as its name implies. Its black walls seem to absorb light, and even the brightest days take on a dim and cheerless aspect within its confines. An unearthly stillness pervades its grounds, and even the slightest sound seems jarring amid the silence of the dead.

When a spellcaster who has withstood the horrors of the necropolis uses its power to enhance a fear-inducing spell, his body is wrapped in a shadowy cloud that seems to pulse and writhe with power.

Prerequisite: Only a character with five or more character levels can access the power contained within a *necropolis of dread*.

Location Activation: The obelisk at the center of a *necropolis of dread* sends a magical spear of fear through each creature that approaches within 50 feet. The effect is identical to that of a *fear* spell (Will DC 18). Only a creature that spends a full-round action while within 50 feet of the obelisk benefits from the site's power. Activating the site in this manner provokes attacks of opportunity.

Recharge: Once a *necropolis of dread* has conferred its ability on a single spellcaster, it cannot do so again for one year.

Special Ability (Su): Any qualified spellcaster who draws forth the power of a *necropolis of dread* gains a +4 bonus on saving throws against fear effects. In addition, whenever he casts a spell with the fear descriptor, or uses a spell-like or supernatural ability that induces fear, the DC of the required saving throw increases by 1.

Duration: The conferred ability lasts for one year.

Aura: Strong necromancy.

Ability Value: 3,000 gp.

POOL OF FROZEN SOULS

This strange pool of magic water is akin to an *everflame* but opposite in effect. Formed by the presence of powerful cold magic or a long-standing portal to a particularly frigid section of the Elemental Plane of Water, a *pool of frozen souls* resembles a pool of extremely cold water. Regardless of the outside temperature, the water in a *pool of frozen souls* never freezes, and it remains frigid to the touch even in the hottest ambient temperatures. Because the magic of the pool is tied to its location, not to the water within it, any water removed from the pool is simply normal water. A *pool of frozen souls* that is completely drained of water loses its magical abilities.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *pool of frozen souls* by making Knowledge (the planes) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 10: A *pool of frozen souls* is the remnant of a long-standing connection to the Elemental Plane of Water, and it holds the essence of that watery realm.

DC 15: It is said that those who withstand the chill of a *pool of frozen souls* can resist the effects of any cold.

DC 20: Those who stand within a *pool of frozen souls* gain significant resistance to cold damage by drawing a small portion of its magic into themselves.

Description: The area around a *pool of frozen souls* is perpetually filled with an unearthly chill. The cold of the air and the water of the pool painfully freezes creatures and objects in contact with them, but these effects do not spread beyond the small area around the pool itself. Because *pools of frozen souls* are found only in areas that have held gates to the Elemental Plane of Water for long periods, they almost always occur near or within some great body of water. Such a site might include an island on which land-bound creatures forged the gate, but more often they are submerged in water.

Prerequisite: Only a creature with at least five character levels can benefit from the effects of a *pool of frozen souls*.

Location Activation: A *pool of frozen souls* is continually lit by a dull blue glow that emanates from the water itself. This magical pool deals 2d6 points of cold damage per round to any creature in contact with its water.

To gain the benefits of a *pool of frozen souls*, a qualified creature must stand unprotected within its confines for at least 3 rounds. Each incarnation of the pool affects only five creatures at a time. If more than five creatures qualify for the benefit at once, only five of them (selected at random) gain it.

Recharge: Once a *pool of frozen souls* has conferred its benefits on five creatures, it cannot confer them again for one year.

Special Ability Activation and Effect (Ex): A qualified creature gains resistance to cold 5. A creature that already has resistance to cold from another source (even a temporary one, such as a spell or item) gains nothing from the pool. A creature can gain this benefit only once, and its effects do not stack with any other resistance to cold the creature might subsequently gain.

Duration: The resistance to cold lasts for one year.

Aura: Strong abjuration.

Ability Value: 10,000 gp (2,000 gp per affected creature).

SPELLWARD OF ARCANE MIGHT

A magical event of great power sometimes gives rise to a *spellward of arcane might*. Such areas are imbued with so much raw arcane energy that the very air seems to hum with unfocused power. Like other magical locations, *spellwards of arcane might* are extremely rare, and the conditions that give rise to them are poorly understood. A *spellward of arcane might* could arise from battles between multiple powerful spellcasters, the creation of an artifact or a similarly powerful magic item, the use of multiple *wish* spells in the same spot, and similar titanic releases of arcane power.

Although spellwards form anywhere, most are indoors. Magical glyphs of vibrant blue energy continuously form and fade on the walls, ceilings, and floors of these spaces. While only a few such sigils are ever present within a spellward, their glow provides faint illumination within its confines.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *spellward of arcane might* by making Knowledge (arcana) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 15: A *spellward of arcane might* is a wellspring of magical power.

DC 20: A *spellward of arcane might* allows a spellcaster to alter spells as they are cast.

DC 25: A *spellward of arcane might* is a magical location that grants an experienced spellcaster the ability to spontaneously quicken a small number of spells.

Description: *Spellwards of arcane might* are usually found indoors. Every interior surface of such a location is covered in glyphs that glow with a magical light. This faint glow provides dim illumination throughout the spellward.

When a spellcaster enhances a spell with the power of a spellward, glowing blue runes form in the air around her. These runes vanish almost immediately, but their presence is a visible reminder of the power granted by the spellward.

Prerequisite: Only a 5th-level or higher arcane spellcaster can access the power contained within a *spellward of arcane might*.

Location Activation: To claim the power of a *spellward of arcane might*, a qualified arcane spellcaster must stand within its confines and draw its power into herself by force of will. Doing so requires a full-round action and provokes attacks of opportunity.

Recharge: Once a *spellward of arcane might* has conferred its ability on a single spellcaster, it cannot do so again for one year.

Special Ability (Su): An arcane spellcaster who draws forth the power of a *spellward of arcane might* casts certain spells faster than normal. Once per day, she can cast a spell of 3rd level or lower that normally has a casting time of 1 standard action as a swift action instead. (See page 237 for the definition of a swift action.)

The sorcerer Aramil draws power from a spellward of arcane might

Illus. by M. Cotie

Duration: The conferred ability functions for 30 days.
Aura: Strong transmutation and universal.
Ability Value: 9,000 gp.

SHRINE OF THE WEAPONMASTER

Imbued with the martial perfection and power of an exceptionally skilled warrior, a *shrine of the weaponmaster* is a hallowed place associated with great displays of martial skill. Most often, the death of a great warrior gives rise to a *shrine of the weaponmaster,* but it can also result from a significant display of martial prowess by a living warrior or group of warriors. Though called a shrine, such a location has no connection to divine power and can be found anywhere.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *shrine of the weaponmaster* by making Knowledge (history) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 15: A *shrine of the weaponmaster* is the site where a famous warrior fell, or where one or more warriors displayed great martial prowess.

DC 20: A *shrine of the weaponmaster* holds some of the martial skill of the great warrior or warriors who fought there. Those who visit the location can pull some of this power into themselves.

DC 25: A *shrine of the weaponmaster* is a magical location that allows a skilled warrior to bond with a specific weapon, thereby gaining amazing skill with the weapon.

Description: The power embodied in a *shrine of the weaponmaster* stems from the events that transpired there, not from any physical aspect of the location. Thus, shrines vary widely in appearance, though many are found in areas of extreme danger, since such locations tend to require the exceptional feats of arms that give a *shrine of the weaponmaster* its magic.

Prerequisite: Only a character with a +5 or higher base attack bonus and proficiency with all martial weapons can access the power contained within a *shrine of the weaponmaster.*

Location Activation: To claim the power of a *shrine of the weaponmaster,* a qualified warrior must stand within its confines and draw its power into himself by force of will. Doing so requires a full-round action and provokes attacks of opportunity. A *shrine of the weaponmaster* holds enough power to affect up to five qualified creatures simultaneously.

Recharge: Once a *shrine of the weaponmaster* has conferred its ability on five creatures, it cannot confer it again for 30 days.

Special Ability: The magic of the shrine grants the affected warrior great insight into the use of weapons. Each morning after he acquires the power, he can spend 15 minutes practicing his newfound martial knowledge and attuning himself to a single melee weapon with which he is proficient. After completing this simple ritual, he gains a +2 bonus on damage rolls for attacks made with the attuned weapon. The warrior stays attuned to the weapon until the following morning. At that point, he can repeat the ritual with the same weapon or a different one. Failure to perform the ritual on any given day means he does not gain the bonus on damage rolls for the following 24-hour period, but he still retains the ability to perform the ritual on subsequent days until the ability expires.

Duration: The conferred ability lasts for 30 days.
Aura: Strong divination.
Ability Value: 10,000 gp (2,000 gp per affected creature).

TERRIBLE CYST

Terrible cysts are near-organic lesions in the earth itself that crop up in nearly any terrain. These cancerous blemishes form in nearly any above- or belowground location. The presence of a *terrible cyst* causes nearby plant life to turn black and cancerous, stone to crack and crumble, and metal to rust. A *terrible cyst* might form where a powerful demon has lingered for a long time, or where a creature of great good turned suddenly to evil, or where an item of powerful evil magic was created. Such conditions do not always create *terrible cysts,* but they seem to increase the chances that one might form.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *terrible cyst* by making Knowledge (the planes) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 15: Terrible cysts are small lesions in the earth caused by the presence of great evil.

DC 20: A *terrible cyst* persists until a powerful evil creature draws power from it.

DC 25: An evil creature that draws forth the power of a *terrible cyst* focuses it into a devastating physical attack against a good creature.

Description: A *terrible cyst* looks like an oozing, cancerous blemish in the earth itself. Each cyst occupies only a 10-foot-by-10-foot area, but its horrid stench extends much farther. The vegetation in the affected area lingers in a state of rot, and the ground itself reeks of carrion. The whole area glows with a dim, sickening red light.

An evil creature imbued with the power of the cyst glows briefly with the same red radiance when it makes a smite attack against a good creature. Although this glow sheds no useful amount of illumination, it does give the creature's countenance a rough, demonic cast. In addition, the cyst's connection to the Abyss twists the creature's visage into a horrible mask of pure hatred. These effects are only momentary, and the creature returns to its normal appearance as soon as it completes its smite attack.

Prerequisite: Only an evil creature with at least five character levels can draw forth the power of a *terrible cyst.*

Illus. by E. Cox

A terrible cyst turns everything in its vicinity into rot and ruin

Location Activation: Any qualified creature that enters a cyst immediately becomes aware of the dark power held within it and knows intuitively how to access that power. To claim the ability granted by a *terrible cyst*, the creature must stand within its confines and draw its power into itself by force of will. Doing so requires three full-round actions and provokes attacks of opportunity.

During this process, the cyst shrinks and is absorbed into the surrounding terrain, as if the abyssal infection afflicting the land were actually healing. A cyst that is healing has no ill effect on creatures within it, but the terrain does retain a lingering aura of evil until the cyst has completely healed.

Recharge: If an evil creature dies while holding the power of a *terrible cyst*, a new one forms at the spot where its body falls. Thus, any given *terrible cyst* confers its power only once, but the death of the creature that absorbed this power regenerates the cyst in a new location.

Special Ability (Su): Upon draining power from a *terrible cyst*, a creature gains the ability to smite a good foe once per day. On a successful attack against a good-aligned opponent, the creature adds its character level to its damage roll (maximum +20).

Duration: The conferred ability lasts until the creature that holds it perishes.

Aura: Strong transmutation.

Ability Value: 2,500 gp.

WATCHPOST OF VIGILANCE

Though less obvious than other acts of heroism, heroic vigilance also leaves its mark on the very ground where it occurred. A *watchpost of vigilance*, as such a site is called, might form on a distant mountain peak where a lone druid watched over the northern lands for decades before finally bringing word of an approaching army to the communities in the nearby foothills. Alternatively, it could form in an ancient dwarf redoubt, or in an elf watchpost concealed in the forest's high branches.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *watchpost of vigilance* by making Knowledge (history) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 10: A *watchpost of vigilance* forms because of some heroic act of vigilance that took place at the site in question.

DC 15: A successful check at this level allows the character to learn the basic details of the specific act of heroism that created a particular *watchpost of vigilance*.

DC 20: A *watchpost of vigilance* is more than a simple footnote to history. The power held within it grants those who stand watch there sharper eyes and quicker reactions to danger than normal.

Description: Although *watchposts of vigilance* vary in size, most are no greater than 20 feet by 20 feet. Regardless of its actual appearance, a *watchpost of vigilance* commands an excellent view of the surrounding areas. Even in the tight confines of a dwarf stronghold, such a site might occur at an important crossroads, or in some other place that grants a relatively wide view of the area.

Prerequisite: Only a creature with an Intelligence score of 5 or higher can benefit from the effect of a *watchpost of vigilance*.

Location Activation: To claim the power of a *watchpost of vigilance*, a qualified creature must spend a minimum of 8 hours within its confines and draw its power into itself by force of will. A *watchpost of vigilance* holds enough power to affect up to five qualified creatures simultaneously.

Recharge: Once a *watchpost of vigilance* has conferred its ability on five creatures, it cannot confer it again for 24 hours.

Special Ability (Su): A *watchpost of vigilance* sharpens the awareness, vision, and hearing of an affected creature and quickens its reaction times. The creature gains a +2 enhancement bonus on initiative rolls and on Spot and Listen checks as long as it remains within the watchpost and for 24 hours after leaving it.

Duration: Each incarnation of the *watchpost of vigilance* affects creatures while they are within its confines, and a full 24 hours after the creature leaves the small area of the site.

Aura: Moderate divination.

Ability Value: 1,500 gp (300 gp per affected creature).

ARMOR SPECIAL ABILITIES

The following armor rules supplement the armor and shield special abilities found on page 216 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

SYNERGY ABILITIES

A few of the special abilities described in the following section are called synergy abilities. Such an ability has a prerequisite, much as a prestige class or a feat does. Specifically, a suit of armor must already possess a particular ability before a synergy ability can be added to it. Otherwise, synergy abilities function the same as any other armor special ability.

Despite the hefty requirements for adding synergy abilities to armor, most adventurers consider them well worth the cost. Some synergy abilities magnify their prerequisite special abilities, others add new abilities that work in conjunction with the armor's other qualities, and still others do both.

MAGIC ARMOR AND SHIELD SPECIAL ABILITY DESCRIPTIONS

Like the armor special abilities described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, the following qualities can be combined in any magic armor a character creates. However, all the abilities described in this section must be activated in order to function, and their descriptions are broken down into sections, as follows.

ABILITY DESCRIPTION FORMAT

The general nature of the armor is described first.

Description: This section details how the armor looks and how the wearer looks and feels when its special ability is activated.

Prerequisite: Any other special ability that the armor must have to acquire the ability in question is noted here.

Activation: The method of activating the special ability is described in this section.

Effect: This section details the effect of the special ability. Any limitations on usage and duration are also specified.

Aura/Caster Level: This section presents the aura type and strength, as well as the caster level of the effect.

Construction: The creation requirements for armor with this ability are given here.

Price: This entry provides the bonus equivalent or extra gp value of adding the ability to armor. (These values are summarized on Table 7–3.)

Table 7–3: Armor and Shield Special Abilities

Special Ability	Base Price Modifier
Energy defense	+3 bonus
Energy immunity	+3 bonus
Fortifying defense (with light fortification)	+3 bonus
Fortifying defense (with moderate fortification)	+4 bonus
Slippery aura	+45,000 gp
Slippery mind	+45,000 gp
Fortifying defense (with heavy fortification)	+5 bonus
Spell trapping	+5 bonus

ENERGY DEFENSE [SYNERGY]

This special ability enhances armor that already provides potent protection against a certain type of energy. Specifically, any energy against which the armor would normally provide protection is redirected to give the wearer additional defensive capabilities against more mundane attacks.

Description: Energy defense armor bears a motif similar to that of energy resistance armor. However, certain elements of the armor—such as flanges, spikes, and other decorations—indicate that it has some offensive capabilities as well.

Upon activation, the energy defense ability wreathes the wearer's body in the element from which its energy resistance property already provides protection. Creatures that attack the wearer in melee are struck by leaping darts of energy that dance from the armor's surface to their weapons.

Prerequisite: The energy defense ability can be added only to armor or a shield that already has the energy resistance, improved energy resistance, or greater energy resistance special ability.

Activation: The wearer activates the energy defense ability as an immediate action in response to an attack that deals energy damage of the type that her armor already resists. Thus, if a spell or effect that deals acid damage targets the wearer of acid resistance armor that has the energy defense ability, she can take an immediate action to generate an acid shield around herself. When such an attack occurs, the wearer chooses whether or not to activate the ability, and she can choose to activate it even if she is flat-footed or unaware of the source of the attack. She can also choose to activate it as a standard action in preparation for an attack, if desired. (See page 237 for the definition of an immediate action.)

The wearer cannot activate the energy defense property in response to an attack that deals no damage of the type that the armor could normally resist.

Effect: The energy defense ability increases the armor's energy resistance by 2. Thus, acid resistance armor that normally grants resistance to acid 10 now grants resistance to acid 12. In addition, any creature that damages the wearer with a natural or manufactured melee weapon deals normal damage and also takes 1d6+10 points of energy damage of the type from which the armor provides protection. Thus, in response to an attack that dealt acid damage, the wearer would be wreathed in acidic energy, and any creature that hit her with a natural or melee weapon would deal normal damage, but also take 1d6+10 points of acid damage. Attacks with weapons that have exceptional reach are exempt from this damage.

The energy defense effect is usable once per day, regardless of its method of activation. The effect lasts for 10 rounds or until the wearer dismisses it (though doing so wastes any unused duration). Once the effect ends, it is not available again for 24 hours.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate abjuration and evocation; CL 10th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *fire shield*, *resist energy*.

Price: +3 bonus.

ENERGY IMMUNITY

This armor renders the wearer impervious to a specific type of energy damage determined on activation. Because the armor can be activated in response to such an attack, it minimizes the wearer's risk of taking energy damage of any sort.

Description: Armor with the energy immunity special ability is decorated in elemental motifs. No particular element is favored in the design; waves, flames, rock formations, and billows of wind are all represented equally.

When the energy immunity ability is activated, the wearer feels a rush of its power. The exact nature of the effect depends upon which kind of energy the wearer has invoked its protection against. He feels a rush of warmth if the armor is protecting him from cold damage, or a chill wind if it is protecting him against fire. A metallic tang fills his mouth and nostrils if electricity protection is in force, and an acrid tang fills the air around him if acid protection has been activated.

Activation: The wearer can activate the energy immunity ability as an immediate action in response to an attack that deals energy damage. When such an attack occurs, he chooses whether or not to activate the ability and can activate it even if he is flat-footed or unaware of the source of the attack. He can also activate the armor as a standard action in preparation for an attack he knows is coming. (See page 237 for the definition of an immediate action.)

Effect: This armor functions normally until its energy immunity ability is activated. At that point, the wearer gains immunity to damage from his choice of the following energy types: acid, cold, electricity, or fire. Once the choice has been made, it cannot be changed until the ability is activated again.

The energy immunity effect is usable once per day, regardless of its method of activation. The effect lasts for 13 minutes or until the wearer dismisses it. Once the effect expires or is dismissed, it is not available again for 24 hours.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate abjuration; CL 13th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *protection from energy*.

Price: +3 bonus.

FORTIFYING DEFENSE [SYNERGY]

Fortification, already one of the most powerful armor special abilities, becomes even more intriguing with the addition of the fortifying defense synergy ability. This power builds off the fortification quality by crippling an enemy's ability to deal damage—even against targets other than the wearer.

Description: Fortifying defense armor is built to make the wearer look like an impregnable fortress of defense. Even light armor with this special ability looks sturdier than normal.

When armor with the fortifying defense ability negates a critical hit or sneak attack, it seems to grow around the wearer. In contrast, the creature that made the critical hit or sneak attack against the wearer seems to wilt, as if the armor's increasing bulk were sapping its strength.

Prerequisite: The fortifying defense ability can be added only to armor or a shield that already has the light, moderate, or heavy fortification special ability.

Activation: When the armor negates the extra damage from a critical hit or sneak attack as a result of

its fortification ability, the fortifying defense ability activates automatically. No action on the wearer's part is required. Thus, the ability activates 25% of the time for light fortification armor, 50% of the time for moderate fortification armor, and 100% of the time for heavy fortification armor.

Effect: The creature whose extra damage was negated by the armor's fortification ability must immediately make a DC 20 Will save. Failure means the armor saps some of the creature's natural combat prowess, negating its ability to deal extra damage with a critical hit or sneak attack against any target for 1d4 rounds. The creature still deals normal damage with its weapons or natural attacks, but any threat is treated as a normal hit—that is, no roll to confirm the critical hit is permitted. Likewise, the affected creature cannot deal sneak attack damage for the duration of the effect, although it deals normal damage for such attacks.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong abjuration; CL 15th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *limited wish* or *miracle*.

Price: +3 bonus (light fortification armor), +4 bonus (moderate fortification armor), or +5 bonus (heavy fortification armor).

SLIPPERY AURA [SYNERGY]

Slippery aura armor expands on the slippery mind special ability, granting its potent effects to the wearer's allies for a short time each day.

Description: Armor with this ability features several decorative studs that radiate outward from the surface. Runes of escape surround each stud, as if the armor's power might also affect creatures around the wearer. When the slippery aura is active, these studs seem to twinkle softly, and the runes rotate slowly around the base of each one.

Prerequisite: The slippery aura ability can be added only to armor or a shield that already has the slippery mind special ability (see below).

Activation: Activating the slippery aura is a standard action.

Effect: When the slippery aura is activated, each ally within a 10-foot-radius gains the slippery mind ability that slippery mind armor normally provides only to the wearer. Thus, any ally within the area who fails a saving throw against an enchantment spell or effect can attempt a second save 1 round later at the same DC. If he fails the second save, the armor grants no further retries. This special ability has no effect on an ally who already possesses the slippery mind class ability.

The ability is usable once per day. The effect lasts for 10 minutes, or until the wearer dismisses it (though doing so wastes any unused duration). Once the effect ends, it is not available again for 24 hours.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong abjuration; CL 15th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *mind blank*, +22,500 gp, +1,800 XP, +45 days.

Price: +45,000 gp.

SLIPPERY MIND

A creature wearing armor with this ability wriggles free of potent enchantment effects more easily than normal.

Description: Armor with this special ability is engraved with symbols and runes representing negation or escape. It looks like the crafter designed it specifically to aid the wearer in escaping snares of some sort. When the ability activates, these runes and glyphs flash with a dull, white light.

Dwarf smiths create most of the armor with this ability, but they prefer not to advertise its exact power to creatures that use enchantment attacks. Thus, they tend to leave the symbols of negation that decorate the armor's surface somewhat vague.

Activation: This armor special ability activates automatically the round after the wearer fails a saving throw against an enchantment spell or effect. No action on the wearer's part is required.

Effect: If the wearer fails a saving throw against an enchantment spell or effect, she can attempt a second save 1 round later at the same DC. If the wearer fails the second save, the armor grants no further retries. This special ability has no effect on a creature that already possesses the slippery mind class ability.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong abjuration; CL 15th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *mind blank*, +22,500 gp, +1,800 XP, +45 days.

Price: +45,000 gp.

SPELL TRAPPING [SYNERGY]

When an opponent's magical attack fails to overcome this armor's innate spell resistance, the incoming effect is stored within the armor until the wearer chooses to unleash it at a foe.

Description: This armor features the familiar symbols of warding that decorate spell resistance armor. These particular runes, however, also seem to indicate a redirection of power—almost as if the armor could channel or direct magical energy in some way.

Spell trapping armor (or a spell trapping shield) is slightly tacky to the touch, almost as if a fine paste covered its surface. Touching it leaves no residue on the fingers, but no amount of cleaning removes the film. In fact, because of its slightly sticky quality, spell trapping armor is difficult to clean at all.

Prerequisite: The spell trapping ability can be added only to armor or a shield that already has the spell resistance quality.

Activation: The increase in spell resistance provided by the spell trapping ability is constantly active. Trapping a spell that fails to overcome the armor's spell resistance, however, requires an immediate action on the wearer's part. (See page 237 for the definition of an immediate action.) Releasing a stored spell is a standard action that provokes attacks of opportunity.

The wearer cannot activate the spell trapping ability if a spell fails to overcome spell resistance he has from another source, such as race or some other item.

Effect: The spell trapping ability increases the armor's spell resistance by 2. Thus, armor with spell resistance 15 now grants the wearer spell resistance 17. In addition, when a spell of 5th level or lower that targets the wearer fails to overcome the armor's spell resistance, the wearer can make an immediate action to trap it within the armor. This ability is usable only once per day, regardless of the level of spell trapped.

The armor can hold one spell of up to 5th level at a time; the wearer can dismiss a stored spell as a standard action to make room for another one. The stored spell is preserved as originally cast in every way, and the wearer can release it at any time.

Since the wearer cannot voluntarily fail a check to overcome spell resistance, attempts to store a spell by casting it directly into the armor are risky at best.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong abjuration and evocation; CL 15th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *spell resistance, imbue with spell ability.*

Price: +5 bonus.

WEAPON SPECIAL ABILITIES

Magic weapons are staples of nearly every D&D campaign. In addition to providing an enhancement bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls, such a weapon can also have one or more special abilities. Some of these abilities augment the weapon's offensive capability, others improve the wielder's defensive skills, and still others provide special bonuses.

Dungeon Master's Guide II presents a new category of weapon special abilities that resemble existing ones but work only a few times per day. This limitation allows greater versatility and ensures that these interesting abilities can be used for weapons wielded by lower-level characters.

SYNERGY ABILITIES

A few of the special abilities described in the following section are called synergy abilities. These abilities have prerequisites, much like prestige classes or feats. Specifically, a weapon must already possess a particular ability before a synergy ability can be added to it. Otherwise, synergy abilities function the same as any other weapon special ability.

Despite the hefty requirements for adding synergy abilities to weapons, most adventurers consider them well worth the cost. Some synergy abilities magnify their prerequisite special abilities, others add new abilities that work in conjunction with the weapon's other qualities, and still others do both.

Table 7–4: Weapon Special Abilities

Special Ability	Base Price Modifier
Brutal surge	+2,000 gp
Caustic surge	+2,000 gp
Defensive surge	+2,000 gp
Flaming surge	+2,000 gp
Holy surge	+2,000 gp
Icy surge	+2,000 gp
Lightning surge	+2,000 gp
Sudden stunning	+2,000 gp
Unholy surge	+2,000 gp
Air elemental power (Large)	+1 bonus
Corrosive	+1 bonus
Earth elemental power (Large)	+1 bonus
Fire elemental power (Large)	+1 bonus
Water elemental power (Large)	+1 bonus
Illusion bane	+7,000 gp
Acidic burst	+2 bonus
Air elemental power (Huge)	+2 bonus
Earth elemental power (Huge)	+2 bonus
Fiercebane	+2 bonus
Fire elemental power (Huge)	+2 bonus
Water elemental power (Huge)	+2 bonus
Air elemental power (greater)	+3 bonus
Earth elemental power (greater)	+3 bonus
Fire elemental power (greater)	+3 bonus
Illusion theft	+3 bonus
Incorporeal binding	+3 bonus
Water elemental power (greater)	+3 bonus
Air elemental power (elder)	+4 bonus
Earth elemental power (elder)	+4 bonus
Fire elemental power (elder)	+4 bonus
Water elemental power (elder)	+4 bonus

MAGIC WEAPON SPECIAL ABILITY DESCRIPTIONS

Like the weapon special abilities described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, the following qualities can be combined in any magic weapon a character creates. However, all the abilities described in this section must be activated in order to function, and their descriptions are broken down into sections, as follows.

ABILITY DESCRIPTION FORMAT

The general nature of the weapon is described first.

Lore: This section, if present, relates any back story that the weapon might have.

Description: This section details how the weapon looks and how the wielder looks and feels when its special ability is activated.

Prerequisite: Any other special ability that a weapon must have to acquire the property in question is noted here.

Activation: The method of activating the special ability is described in this section.

Effect: This section details the effect of the special ability. Any limitations on usage and duration are also specified.

Aura/Caster Level: This section presents the aura type and strength, as well as the caster level of the effect.

Construction: The creation requirements for a weapon with this ability are given here.

Price: This entry provides the bonus equivalent or extra gp value of adding the ability to a weapon. (These values are summarized on Table 7–4.)

ACIDIC BURST

An acidic burst weapon is similar to a corrosive weapon (see page 256), except that it deals even more acid damage. When the wielder scores a critical hit with it, the weapon showers the opponent with slick acid that burns its flesh to the bone.

Description: An acidic burst weapon looks much like a corrosive weapon. Its surface is pitted and worn, although it remains as strong as any comparable magic weapon.

Like a corrosive weapon, an acidic burst weapon is coated with a thick layer of burning acid that drips from its tip when the corrosive ability is active.

Activation: Activating or deactivating the corrosive ability is a standard action. Even if the corrosive ability is not active, the weapon still deals its extra acid damage on a successful critical hit, with no action required on the part of the wielder.

Effect: At its most basic, an acidic burst weapon functions like a corrosive weapon. Once activated, this effect lasts as long as the wielder desires.

In addition, an acidic burst weapon explodes with acid on a successful critical hit. The acid does not harm the wielder as long as she has the weapon in hand. In addition to the acid damage dealt by the corrosive ability, an acidic burst weapon deals extra acid damage on a successful critical hit. The amount depends on its critical multiplier, as follows.

Critical Multiplier	Extra Acid Damage
×2	1d10
×3	2d10
×4	3d10

Bows, crossbows, and slings with this ability bestow the acid energy upon their ammunition.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong conjuration; CL 12th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor plus *acid fog*, *acid storm*, *Melf's acid arrow*, or *storm of vengeance*.

Price: +2 bonus.

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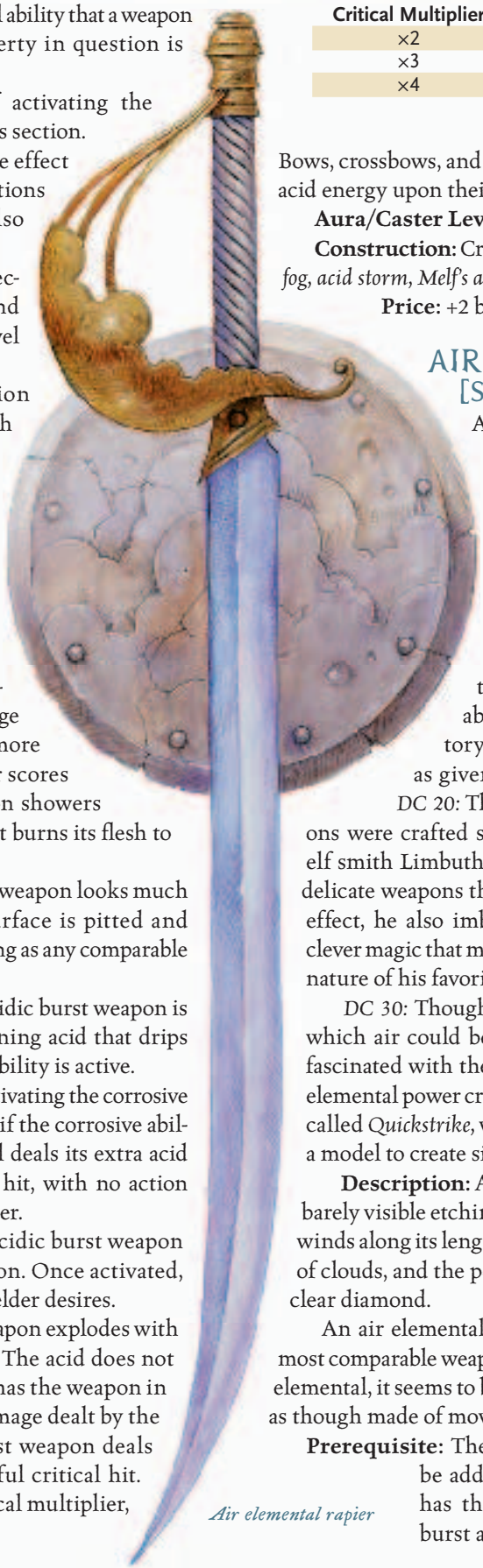


Air elemental rapier

AIR ELEMENTAL POWER [SYNERGY]

An air elemental power weapon allows its wielder to summon forth a powerful air elemental and communicate with it in its native language. This creature serves the wielder both in and out of combat.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about the air elemental power ability by making Knowledge (history) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 20: The first air elemental power weapons were crafted several thousand years ago by the elf smith Limbuth Shadarrahn. Known for creating delicate weapons that used raw elemental air to great effect, he also imbued his items with devious and clever magic that mimicked the ephemeral and elusive nature of his favorite element.

DC 30: Though he was fond of the finesse with which air could be manipulated, Limbuth was also fascinated with the savage power it had. His first air elemental power creation was a composite longbow he called *Quickstrike*, which his apprentices later used as a model to create similar weapons.

Description: An air elemental power weapon has barely visible etchings of blowing clouds and eddying winds along its length. The hilt or grip resembles puffs of clouds, and the pommel or crest is set with a single clear diamond.

An air elemental power weapon feels lighter than most comparable weapons. When used to summon an air elemental, it seems to become temporarily insubstantial, as though made of moving air.

Prerequisite: The air elemental power ability can be added only to a weapon that already has the shock ability or the shocking burst ability.

Activation: The wielder of an air elemental power weapon can summon an elemental once per day as a standard action.

Effect: A weapon with this ability allows the wielder to summon a powerful air elemental ally. The exact kind of air elemental summoned depends on the potency of the special ability. The least powerful version summons a Large elemental, and more powerful versions summon Huge, greater, or elder air elementals.

The amount of time that the elemental remains on a plane other than its native one depends on its kind, as follows.

Air Elemental	Maximum Time
Large	11 rounds
Huge	13 rounds
Greater	15 rounds
Elder	17 rounds

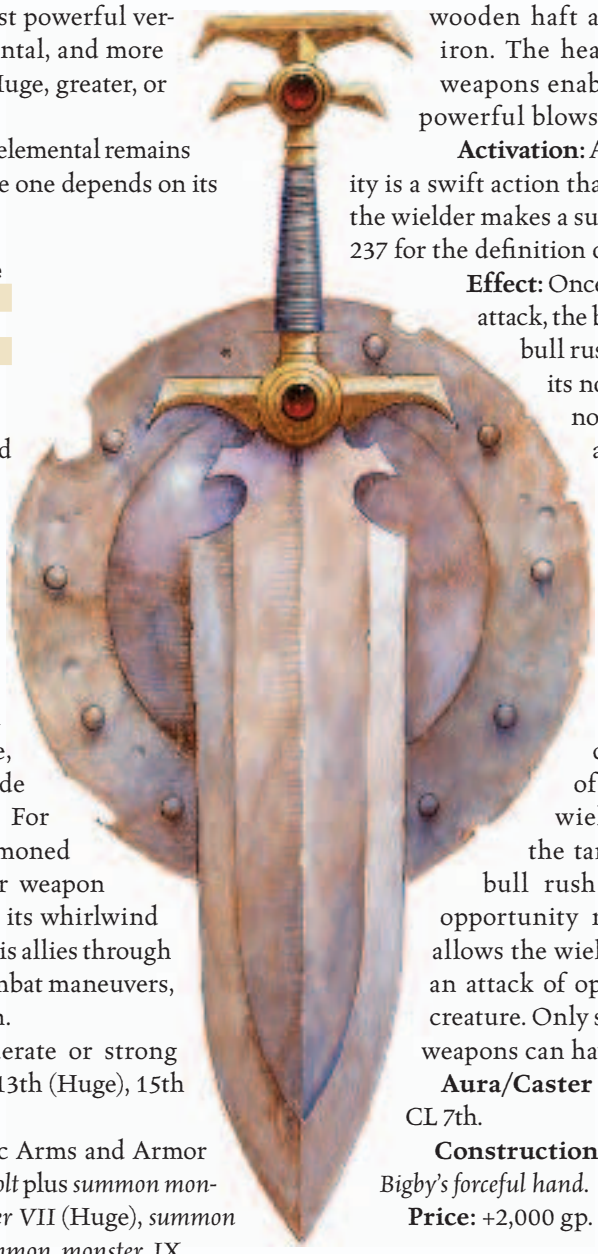
The elemental can be dismissed before its duration expires, but doing so wastes the unused rounds.

The wielder can communicate with the summoned elemental as if fluent in the Auran language. He can give the elemental direction and suggest tactics in battle, or even induce it to provide services other than battle. For example, an elemental summoned with an air elemental power weapon can cause a distraction using its whirlwind ability, carry the wielder and his allies through the air, or perform special combat maneuvers, such as the aid another action.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate or strong conjuration; CL 11th (Large), 13th (Huge), 15th (greater), or 17th (elder).

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor plus *call lightning* or *lightning bolt* plus *summon monster* VI (Large), *summon monster* VII (Huge), *summon monster* VIII (greater), or *summon monster* IX (elder).

Price: +1 bonus (Large), +2 bonus (Huge), +3 bonus (greater), or +4 bonus (elder).



Brutal surge bastard sword

BRUTAL SURGE

Brutal surge weapons deal crushing blows and occasionally imbue a strike with a blast of magical force that hurls the affected creature away from the wielder. Most wielders of brutal surge weapons are physically powerful warriors, but smaller, swifter characters find them useful for their ability to drive away a dangerous creature long enough to allow a quick escape.

Description: Weapons with the brutal surge ability are broader and thicker than normal versions, and they usually have darker coloring as well. For example, a brutal surge spear has a dark, nearly charred wooden haft and a head made of blackened iron. The heavy blades and shafts of these weapons enable them to deliver abnormally powerful blows.

Activation: Activating a weapon with this ability is a swift action that must occur immediately after the wielder makes a successful melee attack. (See page 237 for the definition of a swift action.)

Effect: Once per day, upon a successful melee attack, the brutal surge weapon can initiate a bull rush attempt in addition to dealing its normal damage. The attempt does not provoke attacks of opportunity and is resolved using the wielder's size, Strength, and other relevant characteristics. A character who wields a brutal surge weapon in two hands gains a +2 bonus on the bull rush attempt.

If successful, the bull rush pushes the affected creature back the greatest possible distance allowed by the result of the opposed check, but the wielder does not move along with the target. Movement caused by this bull rush attempt provokes attacks of opportunity normally, except that it never allows the wielder of the brutal surge weapon an attack of opportunity against the affected creature. Only slashing and bludgeoning melee weapons can have the brutal surge ability.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate evocation; CL 7th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *Bigby's forceful hand.*

Price: +2,000 gp.

CAUSTIC SURGE

A caustic surge weapon spews forth a deadly burst of acid for a short time each day. Caustic surge weapons are generally favored by characters who prefer to strike from hiding, or by those who make a practice of breaking into secured areas. The weapon's ability to deliver damage quickly works well with the sneak attack ability, and the fact that acid quickly and quietly damages objects such as doors or locks can prove very useful to a stealthy cat burglar or a quick-striking thug.

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Description: Caustic surge weapons typically have a sickly green tint, and many are of unusual design. A bladed weapon with this property, for example, typically has an exotic wavy blade rather than a straight one. In addition, a caustic surge weapon bears a single green gem, such as an emerald.

Activation: Activating a weapon with this ability is a swift action that must occur immediately after the wielder makes a successful melee attack. (See page 237 for the definition of a swift action.)

Effect: On a successful melee attack, the wielder can cause the weapon to expel its acidic burst, which deals an extra 2d6 points of acid damage to the target. This acid does not harm the wielder. This ability is usable a number of times per day equal to the wielder's Constitution bonus.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate evocation; CL 5th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *Melf's acid arrow.*

Price: +2,000 gp.

CORROSIVE

A corrosive weapon harnesses the effects of acid, burning enemies with every blow.

Description: The surface of a corrosive weapon looks dark and pitted, and the portion that deals damage to foes actually appears fragile, as if the first blow might break it. This appearance is deceptive, however, since the weapon is as strong as any other magic weapon.

When activated, a corrosive weapon becomes slick with a thick layer of acidic fluid. Small drops fall from its surface to the ground, hissing as if in anticipation of combat.

Activation: Activating or deactivating the corrosive ability is a standard action.

Effect: A corrosive weapon deals an extra 1d6 points of acid damage on each successful hit. The wielder takes no damage from the corrosive properties of the acid coating the weapon. Once activated, the effect lasts as long as the wielder desires.

Bows, crossbows, and slings with this ability bestow the acid energy upon their ammunition.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate conjuration; CL 10th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor and *acid fog, acid storm, Melf's acid arrow,* or *storm of vengeance.*

Price: +1 bonus.

DEFENSIVE SURGE

Weapons with this special ability protect the wielder at crucial moments or during particularly desperate encounters.

Description: Weapons with the defensive surge quality are thicker and heavier than normal versions. Regardless of their appearance, defensive surge weapons feel well balanced in the hands of any wielder. This trait does not allow a nonproficient wielder to use the weapon any better than he normally could, but anyone who handles the weapon knows that it's special in some way.

Activation: Activating a weapon with this ability is a swift action that must occur immediately after the wielder makes a successful melee attack. (See page 237 for the definition of a swift action.)

Effect: During any round in which the wielder uses the Combat Expertise feat or fights defensively, he can trigger the sword's magic and gain an additional +2 bonus to Armor Class. During a round in which he takes the total defense option, he gains an additional +4 bonus to Armor Class. This ability is usable a number of times per day equal to the wielder's Charisma bonus.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate abjuration; CL 5th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *shield.*

Price: +2,000 gp.

EARTH ELEMENTAL POWER [SYNERGY]

Much like an air elemental power weapon, a weapon with this ability allows the wielder to call forth a powerful ally to aid him in battle. In this case, the ally takes the form of an earth elemental, which the wielder directs as desired.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about the earth elemental power ability by making Knowledge (history) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 20: The first earth elemental power weapon was designed by the dwarf weaponsmith Daergal Ebonforge, who wanted a weapon capable of calling forth a powerful ally in battle.

DC 30: Ebonforge based his work on, of all things, the work of the elf smith Limbuth Shadarrahn. Daergal's first earth elemental power weapon, the mighty warhammer known as *Thunderstone,* has achieved near-legendary status among some dwarf clans. It was lost nearly a thousand years ago when its last bearer was slain in a war against the drow, but dwarf adventurers are still mounting fruitless quests to locate it.

Description: Earth elemental power weapons are sturdily crafted, much like the elementals they summon. Even the most elegant one appears thicker of blade or haft than normal, and the weapon is decorated with earthlike motifs. A single emerald is always set in the pommel or grip.

An earth elemental power weapon gives its wielder an added feeling of stability. When it is used to summon an elemental ally, its surface seems to grow craggy and rocky, roiling as if an avalanche had spilled down its length.

Prerequisite: The earth elemental power ability can be added only to a weapon that already has the corrosive ability or the acidic burst ability (both described above).

Activation: The wielder of an earth elemental power weapon can summon an earth elemental once per day as a standard action.

Effect: A weapon with this ability allows the wielder to summon a powerful earth elemental ally. The exact kind of earth elemental summoned depends on the potency of the special ability. The least powerful version summons a Large elemental, and more powerful versions summon Huge, greater, or elder earth elementals.

The amount of time that the elemental remains on a plane other than its native one depends on its kind, as follows.

Earth Elemental	Maximum Time
Large	11 rounds
Huge	13 rounds
Greater	15 rounds
Elder	17 rounds

The elemental can be dismissed before its duration expires, but doing so wastes any unused rounds.

The wielder can communicate with the summoned elemental as if fluent in the Terran language. He can give the elemental direction and suggest tactics in battle, or even induce it to provide services other than battle. For example, an elemental summoned with an earth elemental power weapon can break down a wall, perform reconnaissance using its earth glide ability, or perform special combat maneuvers, such as the aid another action.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate or strong conjuration; CL 11th (Large), 13th (Huge), 15th (greater), or 17th (elder).

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor plus *acid fog* or *Melf's acid arrow* plus *summon monster VI* (Large), *summon monster VII* (Huge), *summon monster VIII* (greater), or *summon monster IX* (elder).

Price: +1 bonus (Large), +2 bonus (Huge), +3 bonus (greater), or +4 bonus (elder).

FIERCEBANE [SYNERGY]

A bane weapon with this ability deals even more devastating attacks against the designated creatures than usual.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about the fiercebane ability by making Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (arcana) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 20: Few rangers acquire the skills needed to create magic items, but the gnome ranger Tir Hearthand had learned to hate orcs at an early age. Unsatisfied with normal orc bane weapons, he devoted the last half of his life to creating the ultimate weapon for slaying orcs.

DC 30: The first fiercebane weapon was an orc bane scimitar sized for a gnome and named *Hearthand*, after its creator. Tir Hearthand wielded this weapon for many years, and it eventually achieved a near-legendary status. Gnomes with an interest in weaponcraft now believe it to be a potent artifact capable of striking dead any orc that even sets eyes upon it. *Hearthand* is believed to have been lost in the dark hills near the long-dead orc kingdom where Tir Hearthand met his end.

Description: Carved into the pommel or handle of a fiercebane weapon is a single rune in the Gnome language that represents the foe the weapon is dedicated to slaying.

When one of these weapons strikes its bane enemy, it begins to emit a low, eager hum that the wielder feels thrumming in her hand, as if the weapon were actually feeding off the lifeblood of its enemy. Energy pulses along the weapon in barely visible waves while it fights the foes it was intended to destroy.

Activation: Like the bane special ability, the fiercebane ability is always active. The weapon must be wielded against the appropriate type of creature to provide its benefits.

Effect: A fiercebane weapon excels at attacking one type or subtype of creature. It gains all the benefits that a bane weapon has against its designated foe, plus a few more. A fiercebane weapon glows when its designated foe comes within 100 feet, even if the wielder cannot see or detect it. In addition, a fiercebane weapon deals extra damage on a successful critical hit. The amount depends on its critical multiplier, as follows.

Critical Multiplier	Extra Damage
×2	1d10
×3	2d10
×4	3d10

Bows, crossbows, and slings with this ability bestow the fiercebane ability upon their ammunition.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong conjuration; CL 12th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *summon monster I*.

Price: +2 bonus.

FIRE ELEMENTAL POWER [SYNERGY]

A fire elemental power weapon allows its wielder to summon forth a powerful fire elemental and communicate with it in its native language. This creature serves the wielder both in and out of combat.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about the fire elemental power ability by making Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (arcana) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 20: Revelh Gnockrian was a young half-elf apprenticed to the master elf weaponsmith Limbuth Shadarrahn, who made the first air elemental power weapon. A promising student, Revelh quickly decided that elements other than air could be harnessed in a similar fashion.

DC 30: Known among his fellow apprentices as Flametongue, both for his favorite sort of weapon and for the trouble his human temper could lead him into, Revelh began to experiment with flaming weapons. He was the first to discover that the processes used to create one sort of elemental power weapon could not be used to create another sort. So using new methods and techniques, he constructed the first fire elemental power weapon—a longsword called *Scorch*.

Description: A fire elemental power weapon is flashy and ostentatious compared with other weapons of the same basic type. Flames are etched into its blade or handle, and graven or molded flames figure prominently in other aspects of its design. The pommel or crest is always set with a single ruby.

A fire elemental power weapon seems to crackle when wielded. As it cuts through the air, the wielder hears the faint roar of flames and smells a hint of smoke. When used to summon a fire elemental, the weapon appears to become liquid flame, although it does not burn the wielder.

Prerequisite: The fire elemental power ability can be added only to a weapon that already has the flaming ability or the flaming burst ability.

Activation: The wielder of a fire elemental power weapon can summon a fire elemental once per day as a standard action.

Effect: A weapon with this ability allows the wielder to summon a powerful fire elemental ally. The exact kind of fire elemental summoned depends on the potency of the special ability. The least powerful version summons a Large elemental, and more powerful versions summon Huge, greater, or elder fire elementals.

The amount of time that the elemental remains on a plane other than its native one depends on its kind, as follows.

Fire Elemental	Maximum Time
Large	11 rounds
Huge	13 rounds
Greater	15 rounds
Elder	17 rounds

The elemental can be dismissed before its duration expires, but doing so wastes the unused rounds.

The wielder can communicate with the summoned elemental as if fluent in the Ignan language. He can give the elemental direction and suggest tactics in battle, or even induce it to provide services other than battle. For example, an elemental summoned with a fire elemental power weapon can burn through a door, set a field alight, or perform special combat maneuvers, such as the aid another action.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate or strong conjuration; CL 11th (Large), 13th (Huge), 15th (greater), or 17th (elder).

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor plus *flame blade*, *flame strike*, or *fireball* plus *summon monster VI* (Large), *summon monster VII* (Huge), *summon monster VIII* (greater), or *summon monster IX* (elder).

Price: +1 bonus (Large), +2 bonus (Huge), +3 bonus (greater), or +4 bonus (elder).

FLAMING SURGE

A flaming surge weapon flares with dangerous bursts of flame at its wielder's command, burning any creatures hit by its deadly fire.

Description: Flaming surge weapons typically have wavy blades, or heads or points that resemble flames caught and held within solid metal forms. Its metal surfaces easily catch and reflect the light of any open flame and seem to move subtly with the fire. In addition, a flaming surge weapon is adorned with red or orange gems, such as rubies or amber, that flash like fire when the weapon is wielded.

Activation: Activating a weapon with this ability is a swift action that must occur immediately after the wielder makes a successful melee attack. (See page 237 for the definition of a swift action.)

Effect: On a successful melee attack, the wielder can cause the weapon to burst into flames, which deal an extra 2d6 points of fire damage to the target. This fire does not harm the wielder. This ability is usable a number of times per day equal to the wielder's Constitution bonus.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate evocation; CL 5th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor plus *flame blade*, *flame strike*, or *fireball*.

Price: +2,000 gp.

HOLY SURGE

Holy surge weapons carry the power of pure good within them, and their wielders use this energy to deal extra damage to evil foes. While paladins and martially oriented clerics of good deities do prize these weapons, they tend to prefer the rare and coveted holy weapons. On the other hand, detectives, sentries, investigators, and other heroes who know how to drop a vulnerable foe with a few well-placed attacks find holy surge weapons extremely handy.

Description: These blessed weapons combine graceful artistry with deadly function. Many are decorated with the holy symbols of good gods whose portfolios have martial aspects. Characters who serve gods of valor, honor, and the like craft these weapons for themselves and for others who share their values.

Activation: Activating a weapon with this ability is a swift action that must occur immediately after the wielder makes a successful melee attack. (See page 237 for the definition of a swift action.)

Effect: On a successful melee attack, the wielder of a holy surge weapon causes it to give off a burst of holy

energy that deals an extra 2d6 points of holy damage to an evil foe. If used against a nonevil creature, it deals no additional damage, and that use of the ability is wasted. This ability is usable a number of times per day equal to the wielder's Charisma bonus.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate evocation; CL 11th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor plus *holy smite* or *holy word*.

Price: +2,000 gp.

ICY SURGE

An icy surge weapon emits bursts of dangerous freezing cold at its wielder's command, delivering a deadly magical chill to foes. Characters who wish to strike from hiding or with surprise covet such weapons. Although an icy surge weapon might prove less powerful in a long, drawn-out combat than one with the frost ability, any character who can fell a foe with a few well-placed sneak attacks profits from the weapon's ability to deliver damage at a faster rate.

Description: An icy surge weapon usually has a slender blade with a very subtle blue tint that grows more pronounced in areas with low ambient temperatures. In a tropical clime, an icy surge weapon looks almost normal, but in the midst of a frozen tundra or deep within an icy cave, it has a distinct pale blue sheen that seems to come from within the metal. Portions of the weapon made from wood or other nonmetallic materials do not display this blue tint. In addition, an icy surge weapon is adorned with sapphires or light blue diamonds.

Activation: Activating a weapon with this ability is a swift action that must occur immediately after the wielder makes a successful melee attack. (See page 237 for the definition of a swift action.)

Effect: On a successful melee attack, the wielder causes the weapon to emit a burst of deadly chill, which deals an extra 2d6 points of cold damage to the target. This cold aura does not harm the wielder. This ability is usable a number of times per day equal to the wielder's Charisma bonus.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate evocation; CL 5th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor plus *chill metal* or *ice storm*.

Price: +2,000 gp.

ILLUSION BANE

This weapon special ability allows the wielder to pierce the veil of illusion surrounding her foes and see them as they truly are. Creatures with poor ability to resist insidious illusions tend to favor illusion bane weapons.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about the illusion bane ability by making Gather Information checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 20: A sect of the church of St. Cuthbert whose members despised illusions and those who used them originally created the illusion bane ability. An illusion bane weapon allows its wielder to destroy protective illusions.

DC 25: An illusion bane weapon functions much like the *dispel magic* spell, but only against illusion effects active on a creature struck by the weapon. Illusion bane weapons are characterized by simple black iron ornamentation along the handles or crosspieces.

Description: An illusion bane weapon strikes to the heart of the matter, dispelling illusions that protect creatures from harm. As such, it is typically quite simple in design. Black iron and adamantine are favored materials for illusion bane weapons, and some symbology of St. Cuthbert is worked into the design as a form of homage to the original creators.

Wielders of illusion bane weapons claim that they feel more focused than ever before in their quests and pursuits, as if the weapons help them see situations more clearly. This added focus is not a property of the weapon, but rather a side effect of the confidence that wielding such a weapon brings. When used to destroy an illusion, an illusion bane weapon shimmers with power in an effect reminiscent of heat waves, as if the weapon were burning away the magical energy of the illusory effect.

Activation: An illusion bane weapon can be activated upon striking a creature affected by illusion magic, or when touched to an illusion. Within these limitations, the wielder decides when to activate the illusion bane ability, which is usable only once per day. If it is used against a creature not under the influence of illusion magic, or against a perceived but not actual illusion, it has no effect, but the use is not wasted for the day.

Effect: The wielder of an illusion bane weapon has no miss chance with it against a creature affected by any illusion magic that normally provides one (such as *blur* or *displacement*), even if a magic item generates the effect. In addition, a successful hit with such a weapon allows the wielder to attempt an immediate dispel check (1d20+10) to dispel any illusion magic currently affecting the target—whether or not the blow deals any damage. This effect is a targeted dispel, but it functions only against illusion magic. Thus, the wielder makes a check for each illusion spell affecting the target.

Alternatively, the wielder can attempt to dispel a single illusion by touching it with the illusion bane weapon. For example, touching a *silent image* spell (or an image generated by the *mirror image* spell) with the weapon subjects it to the dispel check immediately. A successful check dispels the illusion, so dispelling one *mirror image* ends the spell entirely for the target creature. Such a use of an illusion bane weapon still counts as a use of the weapon's dispel ability.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate abjuration and divination; CL 10th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *true seeing, dispel magic.*

Price: +7,000 gp.

ILLUSION THEFT [SYNERGY]

An illusion theft weapon is similar to an illusion bane weapon, except that its propensity for disrupting illusions is matched by its ability to reproduce them. The wielder of such a weapon can transfer the power of beneficial illusions to himself.

Description: An illusion theft weapon looks much like an illusion bane weapon with its simple design and dark metal construction. The difference is that an illusion theft weapon always has a cut and polished piece of quartz set in the pommel or crest.

When activated, an illusion theft weapon thrums with power that resembles heat waves. When used to activate a stored illusion, it shifts and jumps within the wielder's grip, as if eager to unleash its power.

Prerequisite: The illusion theft ability can be added only to a weapon that already has the illusion bane special ability.

Activation: The illusion bane special ability can be activated in the normal fashion. Activating an illusion spell stored within the weapon (see below) takes a standard action. Once a stored illusion spell has been discharged, the wielder cannot activate the illusion theft ability until he has successfully dispelled another illusion, which is then stored within the weapon. Unlike a spell storing weapon, an illusion theft weapon need not actually strike a creature to activate the stored spell.

Effect: The first illusion spell that an illusion theft weapon successfully dispels (because of its illusion bane ability) is automatically stored within it. This ability functions like spell storing, except that the illusion theft weapon is not limited to storing a 3rd-level or lower spell. An illusion theft weapon can store only one spell at a time. A spell cannot be cast into the weapon; it can store only a spell that it has actually dispelled with a touch.

The stored spell is preserved as originally cast in every way, except that its duration is effectively arrested at its most recent point. The wielder immediately becomes aware of its remaining duration as soon as it is stored, and he can activate it at any time. When the spell is activated, the duration begins passing again as if no time had passed.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong evocation (plus illusion if the weapon currently stores a spell); CL 17th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *true seeing, dispel magic.*

Price: +3 bonus.

INCORPOREAL BINDING [SYNERGY]

Adventurers—particularly those who hunt undead—favor the ghost touch weapon special ability because it consistently allows a weapon to damage creatures that are mostly immune to physical attacks. However, ghost touch weapons are really valuable only to those who wield them directly. Realizing this drawback, a clever smith of long ago rationalized that a ghost touch weapon would be much more potent if it could extend some benefit to the wielder's allies as well.

Description: An incorporeal binding weapon is always misty gray in color, even if the base material used in its construction has a distinct color of its own (such as adamantine). The weapon is simple in design, with no special frills or ornamentation.

When an incorporeal binding weapon strikes an incorporeal creature, it temporarily anchors the target entity more firmly to the material world. In so doing, it emits a single pulse of gray energy and seems to slow for a fraction of a second while passing through the creature's body. The wielder is aware of this slowing effect, but it doesn't actually hamper his combat ability.

Prerequisite: The incorporeal binding ability can be added only to a weapon that already has the ghost touch special ability.

Activation: The incorporeal binding ability activates automatically whenever the weapon strikes an incorporeal creature.

Effect: An incorporeal creature damaged by this weapon loses the benefit of its incorporeal miss chance (50%) for 1 round. It also does not benefit from its normal 50% chance to ignore damage from spells originating from a corporeal source. It does, however, retain all other benefits of incorporeality, including immunity to all nonmagical attack forms, the ability to pass through solid objects, and a deflection bonus to AC equal to its Charisma bonus (if any).

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate abjuration; CL 9th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *plane shift, dimensional anchor.*

Price: +3 bonus.

LIGHTNING SURGE

A lighting surge weapon exudes a deadly spark at its wielder's command, scorching its target with electrical energy. Like other surge weapons, it is an excellent choice for a character who likes to strike from hiding or finish off opponents with one or two well-placed attacks.

Description: Lightning surge weapons occasionally crackle with tiny sparks of electrical energy, but they have no other physical traits that reflect their true nature.

Activation: Activating a weapon with this ability is a swift action that must occur immediately after the wielder makes a successful melee attack. (See page 237 for the definition of a swift action.)

Effect: On a successful melee attack, the wielder causes the weapon to emit a jolt of electrical energy, which deals an extra 2d6 points of electricity damage to the target. This electrical energy does not harm the wielder. This ability is usable a number of times per day equal to the wielder's Charisma bonus.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate evocation; CL 5th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor plus *call lightning* or *lightning bolt*.

Price: +2,000 gp.

SUDDEN STUNNING

Weapons with the sudden stunning ability can, to put it simply, knock their targets into next week.

Description: A sudden stunning weapon is usually broad and heavy compared to other weapons of its kind. It displays a rough but solid craftsmanship that speaks of straightforward functionality.

Activation: Activating a weapon with this ability is a swift action that must occur immediately after the wielder makes a successful melee attack. (See page 237 for the definition of a swift action.)

Effect: On a successful melee attack, the wielder causes the weapon to emit a surge of magical energy. Unless the target succeeds on a Reflex save (DC 10 + 1/2 wielder's level + wielder's Cha modifier), it is stunned for 1d4+1 rounds. This ability is usable a number of times per day equal to the wielder's Charisma bonus.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate enchantment; CL 9th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *hold monster*.

Price: +2,000 gp.

UNHOLY SURGE

Unholy surge weapons carry the power of pure evil within them, and their wielders use this energy to deal extra damage to good foes. Blackguards, thugs, and other servants of evil prize these weapons for their insidious ability to deliver a significant amount of harm to a good creature with just a few blows.

Description: These vile weapons usually have an abundance of menacing features—typically jagged spikes, skulls, and other macabre designs. Many are decorated with the holy symbols of evil gods whose portfolios have martial aspects. Characters who serve gods of murder, strife, and the like craft these weapons for themselves and for others who share their foul desires.

Activation: Activating a weapon with this ability is a swift action that must occur immediately after the wielder makes a successful melee attack. (See page 237 for the definition of a swift action.)

Effect: On a successful melee attack, the wielder of an unholy surge weapon causes it to give off a burst of unholy energy that deals an extra 2d6 points of unholy damage to a good foe. If used against a nongood creature, it deals no additional damage, and that use of the ability is wasted. This ability is usable a number of times per day equal to the wielder's Charisma bonus.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate evocation; CL 11th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor plus *unholy blight* or *unholy word*.

Price: +2,000 gp.

WATER ELEMENTAL POWER [SYNERGY]

Like other weapons of elemental power, a weapon with this ability allows the wielder to call forth a powerful ally to aid him in battle. In this case, the ally takes the form of a water elemental, which the wielder directs as desired.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about the water elemental power ability by making Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (history) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 20: The half-elf weaponsmith Revelh Gnockrian did not cease his efforts to harness the elements into weapons with the creation of the first fire elemental weapon. Shortly thereafter, he turned his attention the flowing, rhythmic, yet still unpredictable element of water. Once again, he used new techniques that were especially suited to the element in question.

DC 30: The fact that Revelh had taken on a number of human apprentices over the years distanced him from the elven community he called home, and as his research progressed, both his business and his health suffered. Upon completing the first water elemental power weapon—a fierce spiked chain that he named *Surge*—he bequeathed it to his eldest son, then gasped his last breath.

Description: Water elemental power weapons look as if water were flowing along their surfaces, although they are as solid as any other weapons. Each weapon with this quality seems to have a faint blue cast, and the handle or grip is decorated with images of breaking waves. The pommel or crest is set with a single sapphire.

When it is used to summon an elemental ally, the weapon's surface seems to become pure water for just a moment, and the sound of surf fills the wielder's ears.

Prerequisite: The water elemental power ability can be added only to a weapon that already has the frost or icy burst special ability.

Activation: The wielder of a water elemental power weapon can summon a water elemental once per day as a standard action.

Effect: A weapon with this ability allows the wielder to summon a powerful water elemental ally. The exact kind of water elemental summoned depends on the potency of the special ability. The least powerful version summons

a Large elemental, and more powerful versions summon Huge, greater, or elder water elementals.

The amount of time that the elemental remains on a plane other than its native one depends on its kind, as follows.

Water Elemental	Maximum Time
Large	11 rounds
Huge	13 rounds
Greater	15 rounds
Elder	17 rounds

The elemental can be dismissed before its duration expires, but doing so wastes any unused rounds.

The wielder can communicate with the summoned elemental as if fluent in the Aquan language. He can give the elemental direction and suggest tactics in battle, or even induce it to provide services other than battle. For example, an elemental summoned with a water elemental power weapon can suck enemies into a whirlpool, extinguish a flame, or perform special combat maneuvers, such as the aid another action.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate or strong conjuration; CL 11th (Large), 13th (Huge), 15th (greater), 17th (elder).

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor plus *chill metal* or *ice storm* plus *summon monster* VI (Large), *summon monster* VII (Huge), *summon monster* VIII (greater), or *summon monster* IX (elder).

Price: +1 bonus (Large), +2 bonus (Huge), +3 bonus (greater), or +4 bonus (elder).

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Ghost gauntlet

SPECIFIC WEAPONS

The following specific weapons supplement those found on page 226 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Table 7–5: Specific Weapons

Specific Weapon	Market Price
Dagger of lifekeeping	38,702 gp
Ghost gauntlet	68,782 gp

DAGGER OF LIFEKEEPING

This magic dagger defends you by making you more resistant to harmful effects, protecting you against physical attack, and infusing additional vigor into your body.

Description: The dagger is of light gray metal, exquisitely inscribed with a tracery of decorative lines across the blade. The hilt is wrapped in oiled black leather.

When first drawn from its sheath for the day, the dagger gleams with white light, a light that seems to pass to into its wielder.

Activation: Wielding the dagger is sufficient to activate its base qualities described below. Once per day, when the dagger is first drawn from its scabbard in any given 24-hour period, the dagger grants 1d10+10 temporary hit points.

Effect: This *+1 defending dagger* grants the wielder a +2 resistance bonus on all saving throws as long as it is wielded. In addition, once every 24 hours it grants 1d10+10 temporary hit points to anyone who draws it. These temporary hit points last for up to 10 hours.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong necromancy; CL 11th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *resistance*, *false life*, and *shield* or *shield of faith*, 19,351 gp, 1,548 XP, 20 days.

Weight: 1 lb.

Price: 38,702 gp.

GHOST GAUNTLET

This magical gauntlet allows you to attack spiritual beings and other normally immaterial creatures.

Description: This strange gauntlet is made of a pale gray metal that seems almost transparent at times.

When the gauntlet is worn, the gauntlet fades into near complete transparency, leaving behind runes along the fingers that look almost like tattoos.

Activation: Wearing the gauntlet activates all its various effects as you desire. Any weapon gripped by your gauntleted hand also gains the ghost touch special ability. The gauntlet's most impressive feature, though, is its ability to make parts of itself (and the corresponding portions of your hand inside) incorporeal. You can apply the effect to portions of your hands, leaving bits of your fingertips intact, so that your can reach inside locks and objects to manipulate their mechanisms. Thus, the gauntlet grants you a +5 competence bonus on Disable Device and Open Lock checks.

In addition, a *ghost gauntlet* can be used to transport an object that you touch with it to a distant location on the

Ethereal Plane, as though by the *teleport object* spell. This ability is usable once per day.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong conjuration; CL 13th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *plane shift*, *teleport object*, 34,391 gp, 2,751 XP, 35 days.

Weight: 1 lb.

Price: 68,782 gp.

RINGS

The following rings supplement those found on page 229 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

All the rings described in this section must be activated in order to function, and their descriptions are broken down into sections, as follows.

RING DESCRIPTION FORMAT

The general nature of the ring is described first.

Description: This section details how the ring looks and how the wearer looks and feels when its special ability is activated.

Activation: The method of activating the ring is described in this section.

Effect: This section details the effect of the ring. Any limitations on usage and duration are also specified.

Aura/Caster Level: This section presents the aura type and strength, as well as the caster level of the effect.

Construction: The creation requirements for a ring of this sort are given here.

Price: This entry provides the ring's market price. (These values are summarized on Table 7–6.)

Table 7–6: Rings

Ring	Market Price
Ring of greater counterspells	16,000 gp
Ring of mental fortitude	110,000 gp

RING OF GREATER COUNTERSPELLS

The *ring of counterspells* described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* is a potent item that allows the wearer to automatically negate a single spell stored within it. In addition to this quality, however, the *ring of greater counterspells* grants an even more powerful ability to anyone who has the innate ability to counterspell. Specifically, any spellcaster who wears it can attempt to counterspell a spell once per day, even if caught unprepared.

Description: A *ring of greater counterspells* is made of white gold forged in a braided pattern. A single ruby set in its center flickers and pulses with magical energy as long as a spell is stored within the ring.

The ruby flashes if the stored spell is used as a counterspell. If the wearer is a spellcaster who activates the ring's more potent, secondary effect, the braids of white gold seem to twist and writhe on his finger, and the metal glows faintly as if it were growing hot, although the wearer feels no heat.

Activation: Countering a spell using the stored spell requires no action, as noted in the description of the *ring of counterspells*, page 230 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Activating the ring's secondary effect, however, is an immediate action (see page 237).

Effect: This ring can hold a spell of 1st through 6th level, much like a *ring of counterspells*. This ability is usable by anyone.

Once stored, a spell cannot be cast out of the ring. Instead, should that spell ever be cast upon the wearer, it is immediately countered, as a counterspell action, requiring no action (or even knowledge) on the wearer's part. Once so used, the spell stored within the ring is gone, and a new spell (or the same one as before) can be placed in it.

A spellcaster capable of countering a spell on his own can access the ring's secondary ability—to counter a spell. Once per day as an immediate action, the wearer can attempt to counter a single spell cast by a spellcaster he can see, provided the latter is within 100 feet. Like the ring's other power, using this one requires no preparation or knowledge on the wearer's part. He need not make a Spellcraft check to identify the spell being cast, and the spell he uses to counterspell can be of any level. This counterspell attempt functions like *dispel magic* used to counter a spell, except that the wearer adds his caster level to the counterspell check (maximum +20). Thus, a 12th-level wizard wearing a *ring of greater counterspells* would roll 1d20+12 when activating this ability. (See page 237 for the definition of an immediate action.)

Aura/Caster Level: Strong evocation and abjuration; CL 15th.

Construction: Forge Ring, *imbue with spell ability*, *dispel magic*, 8,000 gp, 640 XP, 16 days.

Weight: —.

Price: 16,000 gp.

RING OF MENTAL FORTITUDE

Not every adventurer possesses the strength of will necessary to defeat menaces that control the mind. Mind flayers, aboleths, and dark spellcasters favor magic that crush the will or control the actions of others. *The ring of mental fortitude* helps the wearer face down such threats.

Description: The bumpy, ridged surface of this platinum ring is disturbingly reminiscent of a brain. Small flakes of gold lie within some of the cracks, as if protecting the "brain" from intrusion.

When the wearer is subjected to a mind-affecting spell or ability, the ring glows with a dim, gray light. This visible signal that a mind-affecting attack has been

directed at the wearer is enough to make adventurers prize this ring.

Activation: While the ring is worn, its power is continuously active. No action is required on the wearer's part to ward off the mental attacks of foes.

Effect: This ring protects the wearer against all mind-affecting spells and abilities as long as it is worn. She need not make any saving throws against these effects; they simply fail to affect her.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong abjuration; CL 15th.

Construction: Forge Ring, *mind blank*, 55,000 gp, 4,400 XP, 110 days.

Weight: —.

Price: 110,000 gp.

RODS

A rod is a scepterlike device that has one or more unique magical powers and is usable by anyone. A rod must be held in one hand to activate its powers.

All the rods described in this section must be activated in order to function, and their descriptions are broken down into sections, as follows.

ROD DESCRIPTION FORMAT

The general nature of the rod is described first.

Description: This section details how the rod looks and (if applicable) how the wielder looks and feels when its special ability is activated.

Activation: The method of activating the rod is described in this section.

Effect: This section details the effect of the rod. Any limitations on usage and duration are also specified.

Aura/Caster Level: This section presents the aura type and strength, as well as the caster level of the effect.

Construction: The creation requirements for a rod with this ability are given here.

Price: This entry provides the rod's market price. (These values are summarized on Table 7–7.)

Table 7–7: Rods

Rod	Market Price
Rod of grievous wounds	2,000 gp
Rod of sure striking	4,000 gp
Conduit rod	10,000 gp
Rod of avoidance	10,000 gp
Soul anchor	10,000 gp
Magic siphon	25,000 gp

CONDUIT ROD

Conduit rods are powerful magical enigmas that alter the fundamental ways in which magical energies interact. When activated, a *conduit rod* weakens the energy resistance of the user and all nearby creatures. Although powerful, these effects are temporary and limited to the elemental energy types common to evocation spells.

Description: Each end of this slender, ebony rod is set with a clear, jagged crystal. A wild energy seems to flicker in the depths of these stones, and anyone who stares intently into one occasionally sees minute flares of fire, tiny sparks of electricity, and other glimpses of the magical energy types.

Activation: A *conduit rod* requires a standard action to activate.

Effect: As a standard action, anyone holding a *conduit rod* chooses an energy type (acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic). When the rod is activated, the wielder and all adjacent creatures are treated as if their existing resistance to energy of the chosen type were 20 points lower than normal. This effect lasts for 1 entire round, ending at the beginning of the rod wielder's next action. The rod has no effect on creatures that have immunity to the chosen energy type or have no resistance to it at all. A *conduit rod* is usable three times per day.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong abjuration; CL 13th.

Construction: Craft Rod, *antimagic aura*.

Weight: 3 lb.

Price: 10,000 gp.

MAGIC SIPHON

A *magic siphon* drains the magical energy out of existing spell effects, rendering them powerless and ineffective in the same manner that a dispel effect would.

Description: This powerful rod is a short burgundy scepter with a spiral design running along its length and an open, clawlike sculpture at each end. When the *magic siphon* is activated, the claws at each end fill with a brilliant, blue-white energy.

Activation: A *magic siphon* requires a standard action to activate.

Effect: Any creature adjacent to the wielder when she activates the *magic siphon* is affected as though by a targeted *greater dispel magic* spell (caster level 20th). The rod's power is usable once per day.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong abjuration; CL 20th.

Construction: Craft Rod, *greater dispel magic*.

Weight: 3 lb.

Price: 25,000 gp.

ROD OF AVOIDANCE

A *rod of avoidance* is a powerful tool for escaping extreme danger. It protects its wielder with a nearly impassable shield of invisible force that turns most attacks harmlessly aside. This field is so powerful that even the great energies of the rod cannot maintain it for very long. But even though it cannot protect the wielder from more than a handful of attacks, it can easily mean the difference between life and death when used at the right moment.

Description: A *rod of avoidance* is made of solid gold and has a relatively simple design. The emeralds running along its length give it a subtle beauty that matches its obviously valuable components.

Activation: This item requires a standard action to activate.

Effect: Upon activating the rod, the wielder gains a +20 deflection bonus to Armor Class that lasts until the beginning of his next action. The rod is usable three times per day.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong abjuration; CL 15th.

Construction: Craft Rod, *shield.*

Weight: 3 lb.

Price: 10,000 gp.

ROD OF GRIEVOUS WOUNDS

This powerful rod worsens the wounds of nearby creatures. Uninjured creatures within its area are not affected, but any wounded creature experiences an increase in pain. No meaningful resistance to the effect of this rod has ever been recorded.

Description: Every inch of this long, stark-white, ivory scepter is adorned with abstract carvings. The tiny lines of the engraved symbols twist and twine together to form one complete and complex design. Other than its elaborate appearance, nothing about this scepter suggests its magical powers.

Activation: A *rod of grievous wounds* requires a standard action to activate.

Effect: When the rod is activated, every creature adjacent to the wielder that has fewer than its normal maximum hit points takes 1d8 points of damage. A *rod of grievous wounds* is usable five times per day.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate necromancy; CL 8th.

Construction: Craft Rod, *inflict light wounds.*

Weight: 3 lb.

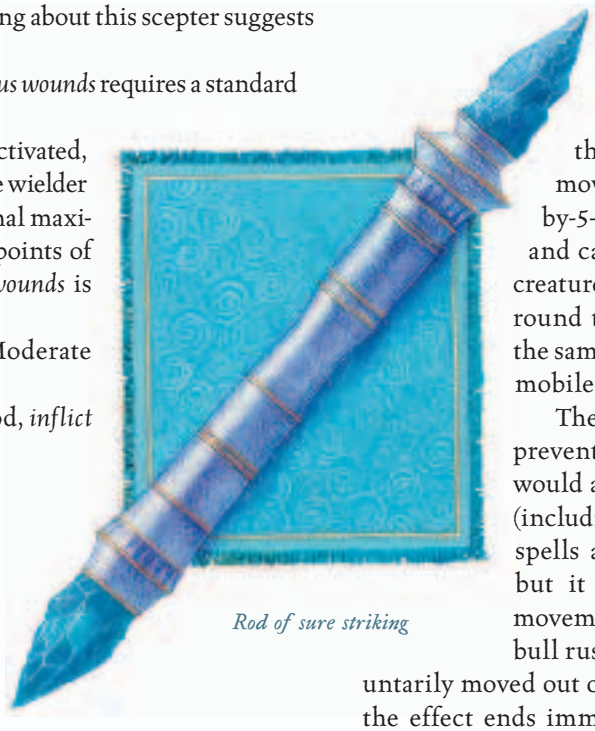
Price: 2,000 gp.

ROD OF SURE STRIKING

With a simple word of command, the wielder of this rod magically imbues her next attack with uncanny accuracy.

Description: Pale blue crystals adorn each end of this silvery rod, giving it a simple beauty that matches its magical might.

Activation: A *rod of sure striking* requires a standard action to activate.



Rod of sure striking

Effect: When the rod is activated, every creature adjacent to the wielder gains a +10 bonus on its next attack roll, provided that the attack occurs before the beginning of the wielder's next turn. Any attack that occurs after that point does not gain the bonus. The rod is usable three times per day.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate divination; CL 7th.

Construction: Craft Rod, *true strike.*

Weight: 3 lb.

Price: 4,000 gp.

SOUL ANCHOR

This strange and powerful rod magically roots creatures in place so that the wielder and his allies can finish them off while remaining safe from danger.

Description: Thin iron bands entwine around jagged fragments of jet-black obsidian to form the haft of this cruel-looking rod.

Activation: A *soul anchor* requires a standard action to activate.

Effect: When the rod is activated, each creature adjacent to the wielder must succeed on a DC 18 Will saving throw or be unable to move from its current location. Creatures that are flying or sinking when the spell takes effect are magically held in place, neither falling nor sinking farther until the rod's effect ends. Affected creatures are neither paralyzed nor entangled, but they are magically prevented from moving out of their respective 5-foot-by-5-foot spaces. They otherwise fight and cast spells normally. Each affected creature can spend a standard action every round to attempt a new saving throw at the same DC. Success renders the creature mobile again.

The immobility imposed by this spell prevents all voluntary movement that would allow a creature to leave its square (including teleportation magic as well as spells and items that allow movement), but it does not preclude involuntary movement, such as that resulting from a bull rush. If an affected creature is involuntarily moved out of its current space for any reason, the effect ends immediately. The rod is usable three times per day.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate enchantment; CL 9th.

Construction: Craft Rod, *hold monster.*

Weight: 3 lb.

Price: 10,000 gp.

Illus. by W. England

WONDROUS ITEMS

The following wondrous items supplement those on page 246 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

All the items described in this section must be activated in order to function, and their descriptions are broken down into sections, as follows.

ITEM DESCRIPTION FORMAT

The general nature of the wondrous item is described first.

Lore: This section, if present, relates any back story that the item might have.

Description: This section details how the item looks and how the wielder looks and feels when its special ability is activated.

Activation: The method of activating the item is described in this section.

Effect: This section details the effect of the item. Any limitations on usage and duration are also specified.

Aura/Caster Level: This section presents the aura type and strength, as well as the caster level of the effect.

Construction: The creation requirements for a wondrous item with this ability are given here.

Price: This entry provides the item's market price. (These values are summarized on Table 7–8.)

Table 7–8: Wondrous Items

Minor Wondrous Items	Market Price
Elixir of reckoning	825 gp
Mantle of second chances	6,000 gp
Medium Wondrous Items	**Market Price**
Domain draught	8,000 gp
Riding boots	12,000 gp
Vest of legends	16,000 gp
Scarf of spellcatching	18,000 gp
Lenses of pain	19,000 gp
Vestment of verminshape	20,000 gp
Casting glove	25,000 gp
Daazzix's vest	25,000 gp
Quill of rapid scrivening	27,000 gp
Major Wondrous Items	**Market Price**
Rogue's vest	29,600 gp
Vestments of divinity	30,000 gp
Slippers of battledancing	33,750 gp
Robe of the inferno	37,120 gp
Lenses of true form	50,040 gp
Bracelets of spell sharing	60,000 gp
Scarab of stabilization	92,400 gp

BRACELETS OF SPELL SHARING

These paired bracelets allow two different wearers to share spells.

Description: A set of *bracelets of spell sharing* consists of two light, silvery bracelets inlaid with pearl.

When a spell is shared between two wearers, the pearl inlays in each bracelet briefly flash with a blue radiance equivalent to the light of a candle.

Activation: As long as each of the two bracelets in a given pair is worn by a different creature, both are continuously active.

Effect: Any spell with a range of personal and a target of you automatically affects both wearers equally when they are within 60 feet of each other. The duration of the effect on each wearer, however, is halved. If this adjustment results in a duration of less than 1 round, the spell fails. The bracelets can share only one spell at a time.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate transmutation; CL 10th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, share spell ability or *shield other*, 30,000 gp (for pair), 2,400 XP, 60 days.

Weight: —.

Price: 60,000 gp.

CASTING GLOVE

A *casting glove* is a spellcaster's best friend. Like a *glove of storing*, a *casting glove* stores one item weighing up to 20 pounds. However, the wearer can make use of a stored potion, rod, scroll, staff, or wand without retrieving it. The major reason that adventurers prefer to channel the magic of stored items is that doing so does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Description: A *casting glove* is a black leather gauntlet with small silver and gold runes around the tip of each finger. Because the magic used in its creation smoothes out any imperfections in the leather and eliminates any seams, the glove feels smooth to the touch. When the wearer snaps her fingers, the runes on the fingertips flash briefly. When she uses the glove to summon or store an item, arcane energy crackles between her fingers.

Activation: A *casting glove* has two functions. Storing or retrieving an item requires a command word but is a free action. Using a magic item without first retrieving it requires a standard action.

Effect: On the wearer's command, one item held in the hand wearing the glove disappears and is stored in it, as with a *glove of storing*. The item can weigh no more than 20 pounds, and the wearer must be able to hold it in one hand. The item is actually shrunk down so small that it cannot be seen and is held in stasis within the glove. While thus stored, the item has negligible weight.

By snapping the fingers of the hand wearing the glove, the wearer causes the item to reappear. A glove stores only one item at a time. Spell durations are not arrested; any active spell effects continue to run normally. If an effect is suppressed or dispelled, the stored item reappears instantly.

The effect that distinguishes a *casting glove* from a *glove of storing* is the former's ability to channel the magic of certain items without retrieving them. Once per round, the wearer of a *casting glove* can call upon one effect of a stored potion, rod, wand, scroll, or staff as if he were

holding the item in his hand. Potions function as if the wearer had drunk them, and scrolls function as if the wearer had read them. (Later, when the wearer retrieves these items, the scroll page is blank, and the potion vial is empty.) Channeling the power of a rod, staff, or wand in this way expends charges from it normally, and the effect is generated as if the wearer were holding the item. If the item has multiple functions, the wearer chooses one in the normal fashion.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate transmutation; CL 11th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *shrink item*, 10,000 gp, 800 XP, 20 days.

Weight: —.

Price: 25,000 gp.

DAAZZIX'S VEST

Daazzix's vest is a boon to anyone who possesses spell resistance. The vest increases the wearer's defenses against magic, making him nearly invulnerable to spells except from the most potent of casters.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about *Daazzix's vest* by making Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (dungeoneering) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 20: The first *Daazzix's vest* was created by a drow wizard fearful of his mistress's wrath. Daazzix created the vest in the hopes of overthrowing his tyrannical sisters.

DC 30: To aid his innate defenses against his sisters' divine magic, Daazzix crafted the vest and arrogantly named it after himself. Unfortunately, while the vest saved him from their magic, he failed to calculate the effects their maces would have on his head.

Description: Each *Daazzix's vest* is made from black silk, and the buttons are shards of stone chipped from a stone golem. Both buttons and vest are inscribed with runes that are also used in the rituals of golem creation. The silk is soft to the touch, and its sheen never grows dull.

Activation: *Daazzix's vest* functions only for a creature that already possesses spell resistance, either from an innate ability (such as drow have) or from another magic item (such as a *mantle of spell resistance*). Once it is donned by such a creature, the vest is always active. If the wearer loses his other source of spell resistance (for example, if his *mantle of spell resistance* is destroyed or suppressed), he immediately loses the benefit of *Daazzix's vest* as well.

Effect: *Daazzix's vest* increases the wearer's existing spell resistance by 5.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate abjuration; CL 9th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *spell resistance*, 12,500 gp, 1,000 XP, 25 days.

Weight: 1 lb.

Price: 25,000 gp.

Domain draughts

DOMAIN DRAUGHT

The imbiber of a *domain draught* gains temporary access to the clerical domain with which it is associated.

Description: These potent elixirs appear in different shades, but each comes in a small, translucent vial inscribed with religious iconography. A successful DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the draught's cleric domain from the iconography on the bottle.

Activation: Like all elixirs, a *domain draught* is a one-use item that is activated on consumption.

Effect: Upon drinking a *domain draught*, the user gains access to its associated cleric domain for 24 hours. She can use the domain's granted power, and if she normally prepares domain spells, she can choose them from the list for the draught's domain as well as her own until the effect expires. If the imbiber gains access to a domain that is opposed to her alignment and prepares domain spells from its list, she might need to atone for that deed (DM's discretion).

Aura/Caster Level: Strong universal; CL 20th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, access to associated domain, 4,000 gp, 320 XP, 8 days.

Weight: —.

Price: 8,000 gp.

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ELIXIR OF RECKONING

A character who consumes an *elixir of reckoning* is assuming the worst. Its power activates only when the imbiber falls in battle, detonating his body in a spectacular explosion. Though suicide troopers in the service of evil warlords commonly use *elixirs of reckoning*, heroes sometimes find use for them when they face odds that they know they cannot overcome.

Description: The elixir is a brilliant, crimson liquid that bubbles and churns with potent magical energy. The vial that holds it is constructed of extra-thick glass, as if to protect those who carry it against the devastating power of the liquid inside.

When the seal is broken on a vial of *elixir of reckoning*, the liquid inside flashes and flares in a brief surge of power. It has a slight scent of ozone, almost like the tang in the air after a lightning strike.

Upon consuming the elixir, the imbiber feels a rush of energy, followed by a sense of euphoria and invincibility. Her flesh almost thrums with power, her heart rate increases, and her skin flushes. This magic is released when she is slain, consuming her body in a blast of magical energy.

Activation: Like all elixirs, an *elixir of reckoning* is a one-use item that is activated on consumption.

Effect: After consuming an *elixir of reckoning*, the imbiber's body is filled with unstable magical energy. If she dies (that is, if her hit points fall to –10 or lower) within 1 hour of imbibing the elixir, her body explodes in a blast of eldritch energy that deals 5d6 points of damage to every creature and object within a 20-foot radius. Targets in this area can attempt a DC 14 Reflex save to halve the damage. Remnants of the imbiber's body survive the blast but are distributed around the periphery of the blast radius.

If the imbiber is not slain (that is, if her hit points do not fall to –10 or lower) within 1 hour of consuming the elixir, it has no effect.

Aura/Caster Level: Faint abjuration; CL 5th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *glyph of warding*, 413 gp, 33 XP, 1 day.

Variants: Rumors abound of more potent versions of the *elixir of reckoning*. Each such elixir deals 10d6 (rather than 5d6) points of damage when the imbiber is slain. The more powerful version costs 1,650 gp, and its aura strength is moderate.

Weight: —.

Price: 825 gp.

LENSES OF PAIN

With a glance, the wearer of this item deals damage to enemies and possibly weakens their resolve as well. *Lenses of pain* give characters the advantage that so many monsters have naturally—they force opponents to avert their eyes or suffer the consequences.

Description: While most lenses are translucent, *lenses of pain* have a slightly green cast because of the process used to create them. Like other lenses, these are made to slip over the wearer's eyes. When so worn, they give the wearer's irises a slightly green hue.

While inactive, the lenses are nearly invisible unless a viewer looks closely at the wearer's eyes. Once activated, they cause the wearer's eyes to glow a fierce, disturbing, brilliant shade of green.

Activation: Activating the lenses is a standard action. Once they are active, the wearer need not take any further action to subject his enemies to the basic gaze effect they grant. However, he can take another standard action to subject one creature to the effect. The lenses can be active for a total of 10 rounds every 24 hours. Turning them off is a swift action, and doing so doesn't waste any remaining rounds. (See page 237 for the definition of a swift action.) The lenses can be activated at different times during a day, but the total number of active rounds in 24 hours cannot exceed ten.

Effect: *Lenses of pain* grant the wearer a gaze attack (see page 309 of the *Monster Manual* for a complete description of gaze attacks) that withers the flesh of foes. While the lenses are active, each creature within 30 feet of the wearer must succeed on a DC 16 Will save every round or take 2d6 points of damage and become sickened. A successful save negates half the damage and the sickened effect. A target that successfully saves becomes immune to the effect of the lenses for 24 hours. An opponent within 30 feet can avoid the effect altogether by averting its eyes and accepting a 50% miss chance on attacks against the wearer.

Alternatively, the wearer can, as a standard action, focus his gaze on a single creature while the lenses are active. The target creature must immediately make a Will save to avoid the damage and the sickened effect, even if it was averting its eyes at the time. The wearer can focus his gaze in this manner on a creature that has already become immune to the general effect and subject it to his gaze anyway.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate necromancy; CL 9th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *symbol of pain*, 9,500 gp, 760 XP, 19 days.

Weight: —.

Price: 19,000 gp.

LENSES OF TRUE FORM

Those who fear the infiltration of shapechangers favor *lenses of true form*. With these lenses in place, the wearer can spot creatures that seek to conceal their true forms through the use of shapechanging. With just her gaze, the wearer also forces such creatures to reveal their true forms to everyone else.

Description: These lenses appear as small, clear, crystalline constructions. When placed over the eyes, they become all but invisible.

When the wearer gazes at a shapechanger or other creature that is concealing its true form through a transmutation effect, the lenses glow briefly with a soft white light. Though the lenses are initially uncomfortable, new wearers usually adjust to them quickly.

When the wearer tries to force a shapechanged creature back into its natural form, her eyes flash with an even brighter white light.

Activation: *Lenses of true form* are always active while worn. Placing them over the eyes requires a full-round action and provokes attacks of opportunity. Both lenses must be worn for the magic to be effective. Furthermore, the wearer is dazzled (no save) for 1 round after donning the lenses. Activating the gaze attack is a standard action.

Effect: The wearer of the lenses sees creatures with the shapechanger subtype or creatures under the effect of *alter self, polymorph, baleful polymorph, polymorph any object, shapechange,* or a similar effect as they truly are. This ability does not pierce illusory shape-altering abilities such as *disguise self;* it works only on transmutation effects.

In addition, once per day the wearer can try to force a single shapeshifted creature within 30 feet to resume its natural form. The target creature can attempt a DC 14 Will save to resist; failure means it immediately assumes its natural form, shape, and size, and it cannot assume a different shape for the next 2d4 rounds.

A creature that wears only one lens not only gains no benefit from the lenses but also must make a DC 11 Will save or be dazed for 1 round. A new save is required at the end of each round until either the single lens is removed or the other lens is donned.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong abjuration and divination; CL 13th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *true seeing, dispel magic,* or *greater dispel magic,* 25,020 gp, 2,002 XP, 51 days.

Weight: —.

Price: 50,040 gp.

MANTLE OF SECOND CHANCES

A *mantle of second chances* allows its wearer to survive deadly situations or succeed at tasks that seem doomed to failure.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *mantle of second chances* by making Knowledge (history) or bardic knowledge checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 20: A human bard named Elva who had a knack for getting herself into tight situations designed the original *mantle of second chances.* Elva frequently found herself wishing she had one more chance at some task or one more opportunity to avoid misfortune.

Mantle of second chances

DC 25: A *mantle of second chances* makes its wearer lucky and allows her second chances when none should be possible. These mantles are flashy in color—suitable for performers—and adorned with symbols of luck.

Description: This mantle is a brilliant shade of blue. Symbols representing various elements of good fortune are embroidered along its hem.

The material of the mantle is smooth to the touch, like silk, though it seems almost to avoid contact with the skin. Light and airy, it flutters with the wearer's slightest movements as if it were eager for more activity. When its magic is activated, the symbols of luck spin and turn along its border.

Activation: The mantle activates in response to the wearer's desire.

Effect: Once per day, the wearer gains the power of good fortune. He can reroll one roll that he has just made before the DM declares whether it resulted in success or failure. He must accept the result of the reroll, even if it's worse than the original roll. The wearer can still access the mantle's power even if he already has a similar ability from a class feature (for example, the granted power of the Luck domain).

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Aura/Caster Level: Moderate divination; CL 10th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, 3,000 gp, 240 XP, 8 days.

Weight: —.

Price: 6,000 gp.

QUILL OF RAPID SCRIVENING

A *quill of rapid scrivening* is an incredible boon for wizards who have little time to scribe spells into their spellbooks.

Description: A *quill of rapid scrivening* is black overall, but its comfortable gripping surface is inscribed with silvery runes representing stars and constellations. A many-colored feather graces its end.

When the quill is used to trace a spell, the inlaid stars and constellations glow faintly and shift across the gripping surface.

Activation: To claim the benefit of the quill, the user must touch it to a blank page in his spellbook, then use it to trace the runes of a spell scroll that he has successfully deciphered and understood. This process requires 10 minutes of effort.

Effect: Once the user has traced the runes of the desired scroll with the quill, the scroll turns blank, and the spell that was on it is automatically transferred onto the previously designated blank page in the spellbook. Only spells on the wizard spell list can be copied in this manner.

Because it is so responsive and easy to write with, a *quill of rapid scrivening* is also a boon to forgers. A user with the Forgery skill gains a +10 competence bonus on Forgery checks made to forge documents.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate transmutation; CL 10th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *arcane mark*, *read magic*, *fabricate*, 13,500 gp, 1,080 XP, 27 days.

Weight: —.

Price: 27,000 gp.

RIDING BOOTS

These boots allow the wearer to ride into battle like the most experienced cavalier. Her horsemanship improves tremendously, allowing her to decimate her foes from atop a charging mount.

Description: These calf-high boots are made of smooth, supple leather and have pointed toes. Comfortable and functional, they are unadorned except for a pair of shining silver spurs.

While these boots are on her feet, a rider feels as one with her mount. The spurs seem to glow an incandescent blue and leave a tracery of light behind them as the wearer rides into battle.

Activation: *Riding boots* activate automatically when the wearer mounts a riding animal. They do not function when she is unmounted.

Effect: *Riding boots* seem to simply know which commands will bring out the best behavior in any mount. They react to the animal and correct it when necessary, almost without the wearer's guidance.

While mounted, the wearer gains a +4 bonus on Ride checks made during combat, plus the benefit of the Ride-By Attack feat (even if she lacks the prerequisite). In addition, if the wearer has the Spirited Charge feat, any charge attacks she makes while mounted and wielding a lance deal ×4 damage on a critical hit, instead of the normal ×3.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate transmutation; CL 10th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *cat's grace*, 6,000 gp, 480 XP, 12 days.

Weight: 2 lb.

Price: 12,000 gp.

ROBE OF THE INFERNO

A *robe of the inferno* provides the wearer with potent, fiery, magical defenses. Not only is he protected from fire, but he can also counterattack with it. The orbs of fire that the robe produces can be launched at enemies from a distance, or ordered to explode around those who would threaten the wearer in melee.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *robe of the inferno* by making Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (history) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 20 (arcana): A *robe of the inferno* not only protects the wearer from fire; it also allows her to launch fiery missiles at foes.

DC 30 (arcana or history): The first *robe of the inferno* was crafted by an elf evoker named Killaith Marcaun, who was badly burned in a fight against a large number of summoned thoquua. Deeply humiliated by the scarring that resulted, she constructed the robe so that she too could harness the power of fire.

Description: The coal-colored cloth of this robe is decorated with crimson-stitched runes that run around the bottom and up the length of the garment in meandering lines. The runes are a mixture of arcane formulas and praises to fire written in Ignan, the language of fire elementals.

When the robe is active, the sigils and runes flare up and seem to burn and smolder, as if the flesh beneath it were on fire. The faint odor of brimstone and a gentle warmth surround the wearer. The four fiery orbs that give the robe its name zoom around the wearer's body.

Activation: Activating the robe is a swift action that requires a command word. (See page 237 for the definition of a swift action.) Upon activation, the four orbs of fire that give the robe its name spring from the sleeves and circle around the wearer until she launches them at foes or deactivates the robe (by stating the command word again). Command words are commonly in Ignan and

always have to do with burning; common examples are "shiirash" (alight) and "ssizak" (burn). Launching one of these orbs at a target within range is a standard action.

Effect: While worn, the robe continuously provides the wearer with a +4 armor bonus to AC. Its major power, however, is apparent only upon activation.

When the command word is spoken, four fiery orbs, each about 6 inches in diameter, spring from the sleeves. They circle slowly around the wearer's body at about waist height as long as the robe remains active. When a fire-based attack targets the wearer, the orbs spin more quickly, deflecting the attacks or absorbing their fire. The orbs do not interfere with the wearer's movement or actions in any way. As long as they are active, the wearer has resistance to fire 10.

The orbs also collectively provide light equivalent to that of a torch. While the robe is active, any invisible creature that comes within 5 feet of the wearer is automatically outlined in glowing flames, as though from a *faerie fire* spell, for 10 rounds. This effect remains in place even if the creature subsequently leaves the 5-foot-radius area.

In addition, the wearer can send one of the fiery orbs streaking toward an enemy as a standard action up to twice per day. To attack with an orb, the wearer must make a ranged touch attack against a single target within 60 feet. Failure means the orb misses and explodes harmlessly in a shower of sparks. Success means it explodes in a 5-foot-radius burst around the target, dealing 8d6 points of fire damage to that creature and leaving it dazzled for 1 round. A successful DC 16 Fortitude save negates the dazzled effect and half the damage. Furthermore, the target and any other creatures in that area are outlined in glowing flames for 10 rounds, as though by a *faerie fire* spell, though only the target suffers the other effects.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong abjuration, divination, and evocation; CL 10th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *scorching ray, resist energy, faerie fire, mage armor,* 18,560 gp, 1,485 XP, 38 days.

Weight: 1 lb.

Price: 37,120 gp.

ROGUE'S VEST

Any rogue who finds one of these precious vests counts himself among the most fortunate of scoundrels. A *rogue's vest* enhances the wearer's natural roguish abilities, making him more effective as both a scout and a combatant.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *rogue's vest* by making Knowledge (arcana) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 20: A *rogue's vest* enhances a rogue's ability to deal devastating damage to unprepared or flanked opponents.

DC 30: A female halfling arcane trickster named Lena Wanderingeye created the first *rogue's vest.* Not satisfied with her already powerful abilities, she created the vest to further enhance her natural talents. She wore her *rogue's vest* for many years before passing the secret of its creation on to the arcane spellcasters of the caravan into which she eventually retired.

Description: This slick-looking, black vest is made of supple, well-worked leather. Its buttons are carved of dull, black glass and seem to absorb light rather than reflect it.

Upon donning the vest, the wearer immediately senses that his footsteps are lighter and more fluid, and his ability to leap out of the way of danger is enhanced. If the wearer also has the sneak attack ability, his sneak attacks seem to strike more true than normal.

Activation: The *rogue's vest* functions continuously as long as it is worn, requiring no action on the wearer's part to activate.

Effect: When worn, this vest grants its wearer a +2 competence bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks and a +2 bonus on Reflex saves. In addition, if the wearer has the sneak attack ability as a class feature or a special ability, his sneak attack damage increases by 1d6 as long as he wears the vest. A character without the sneak attack ability doesn't gain the benefit of this increase.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong illusion; CL 13th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *cat's grace, invisibility, true strike,* 14,800 gp, 1,184 XP, 30 days.

Weight: 1 lb.

Price: 29,600 gp.

SCARAB OF STABILIZATION

A boon to any adventurer, a *scarab of stabilization* protects the wearer from bleeding to death. Every hero is taxed to the limit and beyond at some point in her adventuring career, and this item allows her to live and fight another day.

Description: This item is a solid gold scarab with obsidian chips for eyes. Glyphs of protection and health are carved into its carapace. The wearer can make its legs clench or release by depressing a small button at the base of its abdomen. This feature allows the item to be worn as a cloak clasp or a decorative piece of jewelry.

The scarab functions automatically and continuously while it is worn. If the wearer falls unconscious as a result of injury, the scarab begins to give off a low, barely audible hum. Before the wearer even begins to lose blood, a ghostly shape emanates from the scarab, flitting across her body almost more rapidly than the eye can follow. This ghostly scarab visits the wearer's most serious wounds and staunches any bleeding.

Activation: When the wearer's hit points fall below 0, the scarab activates automatically. Its secondary power to protect the wearer from death activates automatically if her hit points drop to –10 or lower.

Effect: If the wearer's hit points drop below 0 but she is still alive (above –10 hit points), the *scarab of stabilization* automatically stabilizes her. She is still unconscious from her wounds, but she need not make a stabilization check each round to prevent further hit point loss. If another wound causes her hit points to fall further, the scarab automatically stabilizes her again at her new hit point total, provided that it is still between 0 and –9.

If a wound would drop the wearer to –10 hit points or lower, the secondary power of the scarab activates. The wearer does not die, but her hit point total becomes –9, and she automatically stabilizes. This power functions only once; the scarab crumbles into dust as soon as this ability is used.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong conjuration; CL 11th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *contingency, cure light wounds,* 46,200 gp, 3,696 XP, 93 days.

Weight: —.

Price: 92,400 gp.

SCARF OF SPELLCATCHING

This scarf protects the wearer by absorbing spells and even allows her to cast absorbed spells back at her foes.

Description: This long, silken scarf is embroidered with numerous complex magic runes associated with the school of abjuration.

While a spell is stored within the scarf, it glows with a soft white light equivalent to that of a torch.

Activation: This scarf is continuously active as long as it is worn about the neck as a necklace, or around the waist as a belt, or about the arm as a bracer. No action on the wearer's part is required to gain the effect.

Effect: A *scarf of spellcatching* grants the wearer a +2 luck bonus on all saving throws against spells and spell-like abilities.

If a spell targets only the wearer, and she succeeds on the save to resist its full effects, the spell is immediately absorbed by the scarf. The spell has no effect on the wearer, even if a successful save would normally have resulted in a partial effect. An absorbed spell remains inside the scarf for 1 hour per spell level, then fades harmlessly away.

Any wearer with spellcasting ability (or ranks in the Use Magic Device skill) can use a spell stored in the scarf.

If the absorbed spell is on any of the wearer's spell lists, she can opt to "cast" the spell from the scarf as if she were casting it from her own prepared spells (or from her daily allotment of spells, if she is a spellcaster who doesn't prepare spells). If the spell is of a level that the wearer normally couldn't cast, she must cast it as if from a scroll and might suffer a mishap as a result. A wearer with ranks in Use Magic Device can also try to cast an absorbed spell as if from a scroll.

A *scarf of spellcatching* absorbs only one spell at a time, but it grants its luck bonus on saving throws as long as it remains functional. After it has absorbed a total of twenty spell levels, it unravels and is destroyed. If an incoming spell is of a higher level than the scarf's remaining capacity, the spell is negated and the scarf is destroyed.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong abjuration; CL 15th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *spell turning,* 9,000 gp, 720 XP, 18 days.

Weight: —.

Price: 18,000 gp.

SLIPPERS OF BATTLEDANCING

These slippers imbue the wearer with a shocking grace and a deadly fluidity in battle.

Description: These soft, open-toed slippers are made of supple leather and look very comfortable.

Activation: This item is continuously active while worn, provided that the wearer's armor is no heavier than light. No action on the wearer's part is required to gain the effect.

Effect: While these slippers are on the wearer's feet, he moves with unnatural grace and alacrity, gaining an enhancement bonus of +10 feet to his land speed. The slippers also grant him a +5 competence bonus on Tumble checks.

A wearer who has at least 5 ranks in Perform (dance) accesses the true benefit of the *slippers of battledancing.* As long as he uses his base land speed to move (a fly, swim, burrowing, or climb speed), he gains a +2 insight bonus on initiative checks. If he moves at least 10 feet as part of a move action, he can use his Charisma modifier instead of his Strength or Dexterity modifier for attack rolls and damage rolls with one-handed or light weapons (both melee and ranged).

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate transmutation; CL 7th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, 5 ranks in Perform (dance), *longstrider, cat's grace, eagle's splendor,* 16,875 gp, 1,350 XP, 33 days.

Weight: 1 lb.

Price: 33,750 gp.

VEST OF LEGENDS

Stories and anecdotes told by the wearer of one of these vests seem to carry more weight than normal, and others tend to listen more attentively to her words.

Description: Even though this silk vest is festooned with buckles and precious gems, it manages to look classy and fashionable rather than overly gaudy.

Activation: The skill bonuses granted by a *vest of legends* are continuously active while it is worn. In addition, a bard automatically gains the full benefits of the vest whenever she uses her bardic music abilities while wearing it.

Effect: Any character gains a +5 competence bonus on Diplomacy checks and Perform checks while wearing a *vest of legends.*

In addition, a *vest of legends* enhances bardic music abilities when a bard wears it. Her bard level is treated as five higher than it actually is for the purpose of determining the effects of her inspire courage, *fascinate,* inspire greatness, and inspire heroics abilities. This increase in effective level does not grant her any additional bardic music abilities or other class features.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong enchantment and transmutation; CL 13th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *eagle's splendor, greater heroism,* 8,000 gp (for pair), 640 XP, 16 days.

Weight: 1 lb.

Price: 16,000 gp.

VESTMENT OF VERMINSHAPE

This item allows a wearer with the wild shape ability to take the shape of a monstrous vermin as well as the shapes to which she is normally entitled.

Description: This magic vestment appears to be constructed of woven spider silk. Its hem is encrusted with preserved insect wings and discarded exoskeletons.

Vestment of verminshape

Activation: This vestment is continuously active while worn, provided that the wearer has the wild shape class ability.

Effect: A *vestment of verminshape* allows the wearer to assume the shapes of monstrous vermin with her wild shape ability. The size options for the vermin shapes are the same as those allowed for her animal shapes.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate transmutation; CL 10th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *polymorph* or wild shape ability, *giant vermin,* 10,000 gp, 800 XP, 20 days.

Weight: 1 lb.

Price: 20,000 gp.

VESTMENTS OF DIVINITY

Any character who has access to clerical domains can use *vestments of divinity* to access an additional domain.

Description: These fine vestments are made of silk. Fine strands of gold metal are woven into the fabric in intricate designs.

When the wearer casts a divine spell, the gold strands rearrange themselves into recognizable patterns that briefly reflect his holy symbol before returning to their original random configuration.

Activation: *Vestments of divinity* are continuously active while worn, so long as the wearer is either good or evil and has access to cleric domains.

Effect: A good-aligned wearer gains access to the Good domain, and an evil-aligned wearer gains access to the Evil domain. The wearer casts spells with the appropriate alignment descriptor at +1 caster level, and he can prepare domain spells from the new domain, though he is still limited to only one domain spell at each level. If the wearer already has access to the domain granted by the vestments, he instead casts spells with the appropriate alignment descriptor at +2 caster level. A wearer who is neither good nor evil gains no additional benefits from *vestments of divinity.*

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate conjuration; CL 9th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, access to Good or Evil domain, 15,000 gp, 1,200 XP, 30 days.

Weight: 2 lb.

Price: 30,000 gp.

WEAPON AND ARMOR TEMPLATES

A suit of armor, a shield, or a weapon might be special because of the magic it carries, or because of the skill of the master smith who made it. Occasionally, under the right conditions, armor or a weapon can absorb an element of its surroundings, gaining properties that reflect its place of construction, or even the master crafters who made it. Such items are simply products of their environments. Though not magical, they are far more than normal weapons and armor.

Illus. by W. England

Only very talented smiths of specific otherworldly races can apply the templates presented in this section. The properties granted by these templates are nonmagical, so their effects cannot be dispelled, nor can they be suppressed in an *antimagic field*. Templated items are often masterwork and might also have magical properties, but neither feature is a prerequisite.

TEMPLATE FEATURES

Each template applies a minor special effect to a weapon, shield, or suit of armor. Typically, these benefits take the form of bonuses granted to the wearer or wielder in certain situations.

Affinities: In addition to its other advantages, each template has a special affinity for one or more special abilities that can be applied to weapons or armor (such as keen or fire resistance), as well as for specific items (such as *rhino hide* or a *holy avenger*). This affinity manifests as a 10% discount on the gold piece cost of the raw materials required to add the template to the designated item, or to craft a specific magic item from the templated weapon, shield, or armor. This adjustment has no effect on the XP cost for crafting the item, nor on any extra costs that figure into the original item's price (including any costly material components required for its construction). Furthermore, the alteration does not affect the market price of such an item.

For example, fireshaped weapons have an affinity for the flaming burst special ability and the *flame tongue* specific weapon. Thus, a character adding the flaming burst ability to a *+1 fireshaped weapon* would pay only 2,700 gp for raw materials, rather than the normal 3,000 gp. Likewise, a character wishing to turn a masterwork fireshaped battleaxe into a *fireshaped flame tongue battleaxe* would pay only 9,180 gp in material costs (not including the normal cost for a masterwork battleaxe).

Unless otherwise noted, all weapon and armor special abilities and specific items are found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

CRAFTING A TEMPLATED ITEM

Crafting a weapon, shield, or suit of armor with one of the templates in this section is a difficult task. The template is treated as a separate component of the item (much like the masterwork component) with a Craft DC of 25. The creator must have at least 10 ranks in the necessary Craft skill (armorsmithing or weaponsmithing). In addition, a template usually requires the creator to be of a particular race or type, and it might also require that the item be crafted on a particular plane. The creator might also need to fulfill other requirements, as noted in the Requirements section of the individual template description.

A templated weapon, shield, or suit of armor can usually be crafted from any available and appropriate substance, such as steel, cold iron, mithral, or adamantine. Changes to the item's statistics resulting from the template stack with any changes stemming from the use of a special material or special ability. For example, adamantine items have greater hardness than ordinary weapons, as do hellforged items. So, to determine the hardness of a hellforged adamantine item, add the hardness modifier for the hellforged template to the hardness of the adamantine item.

FINDING A TEMPLATED ITEM

Templated armor, shields, and weapons are more difficult to find than other items of similar value because of the difficulties involved in their creation. To determine whether such an item is available in a typical settlement, add ten times the additional cost of the template to the price, then consult Table 5–2: Random Town Generation, page 137 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, to determine whether an item with the new price can be purchased there. For example, a hellforged longsword would normally cost 1,515 gp (15 gp for the longsword, plus 1,500 gp for the template). An item at that price would normally be available in a typical large town or larger community. But adding ten times the template modifier would increase its effective price by 15,000 gp. An item at the new price is available only in a community with a gold piece limit of at least 16,515 (such as a large city). If the item is purchased in an area particularly suited to supply it (such as a fey community for feycraft items, or the City of Brass for fireshaped items), this modifier can be ignored.

FEYCRAFT TEMPLATE

The feycraft template can be added to any suit of armor, shield, or weapon crafted by fey or by creatures in the service of fey. While most fey creatures have little interest in weapons or armor, some find the martial aspects of such items quite appealing.

Satyrs occasionally take ranks in the Craft skills necessary to create these items, as do evil and martial fey (such as the redcaps from *Monster Manual III*). However, most feycraft weapons are made by the servants of fey creatures wishing to procure armor and weapons. Such servitors can be of any race, but they must be under the direct magical influence of a fey creature to create a feycraft item.

A feycraft suit of armor or weapon has all the base statistics of the normal armor or weapon except as noted here.

REQUIREMENTS

The creator of a feycraft item must be of the fey type or be under such a creature's magical influence. A creature merely infatuated with a fey (such as a human enthralled with a nymph's beauty) does not qualify as magically

influenced—the fey must actually employ a spell, supernatural ability, or spell-like ability to establish influence. A feycraft item cannot be created within the boundaries of a small town or larger settlement.

FEYCRAFT ARMOR AND SHIELDS

The feycraft template can be added only to light or medium armor, or to wooden shields. Even fey that are martially minded enough to construct objects of war favor tactics involving stealth and guerilla warfare. Heavier armor or shields only slow the wearer down in most natural settings, so the fey do not specialize in their manufacture. The only exception is the rare suit of mithral heavy armor, which actually counts as a medium armor because of its construction (see page 284 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Because most fey appreciate the beauty of nature, including the living body in its natural state, armor and shields with this template seem to mold themselves to the wearer's body. Some feycraft items also include elements of the creator's favorite natural setting. Satyr armorsmiths, for example, might make armor with a surface pattern that resembles the bark of their favorite trees, or the water flowing in a nearby brook.

Cost: The feycraft template adds 500 gp to the other costs associated with creating a given suit of armor or shield.

Weight: A feycraft shield or suit of armor weighs 10% less than its normal counterpart.

Hardness: The hardness of a feycraft armor or shield is reduced by 1 (minimum 0).

Hit Points: The hit points of a feycraft armor or shield are reduced by 5 (minimum 1).

Arcane Spell Failure Chance: The arcane spell failure chance of feycraft armor and shields is reduced by 5% (minimum of 0%). Fey cast spells, and their smiths have learned to compensate for this tendency in their armorsmithing.

Affinities: Glamered, silent moves, improved silent moves, and greater silent moves (special abilities); *winged shield* (specific shield).

Special: The delicate beauty of a feycraft shield or suit of armor makes the wearer feel more confident, granting her a +1 bonus on Bluff checks made to deceive another creature with words. This bonus does not apply to any other use of the Bluff skill, such as for feinting.

FEYCRAFT WEAPONS

For the most part, fey construct feycraft weapons only when they must battle others of their kind. Thus, such weapons are made from cold iron. This feature ensures that those who hunt demons and other creatures harmed by cold iron also find feycraft weapons quite desirable.

The feycraft template can be added only to light or one-handed melee weapons, and to ranged weapons. It cannot be added to two-handed weapons because most fey prefer to leave an appendage free for spellcasting or the manipulation of an instrument.

Like their armor counterparts, feycraft weapons are frequently made to resemble the smith's favorite natural setting in some way. Curved elements—often a blade or haft, or part of the hilt or handle—are quite popular. Fey smiths frequently construct scimitars and rapiers with this template, but it is rarely applied to axes—even small ones.

Cost: The feycraft template adds 1,500 gp to the other costs associated with creating a given weapon.

Weight: A feycraft weapon weighs 10% less than its normal counterpart.

Hardness: The hardness of a feycraft weapon is reduced by 1 (minimum 0).

Affinities: Dancing (special ability); *sylvan scimitar* (specific weapon).

Special: Feycraft weapons are lightweight and fragile, but extraordinarily well balanced. Thus, they are treated as one size category smaller than normal for the purpose of dealing damage. For example, a feycraft short sword sized for a human deals 1d4 points of damage rather than 1d6. If the weapon would normally be considered one-handed, it can be treated as a light weapon for the purpose of the Weapon Finesse feat, but not for any other purpose. If the weapon would normally be considered light, the wielder can apply his Dexterity modifier instead of his Strength modifier to attack rolls made with it, as if he had the Weapon Finesse feat.

FIRESHAPED TEMPLATE

The fireshaped template can be added to any suit of armor, shield, or weapon crafted by creatures with the fire subtype or by those in the service of such creatures. While most fire creatures rely more on their offensive fire-based abilities than on weapons or armor, some find the martial aspects of such accoutrements quite appealing.

Salamanders and efreet are the most common creators of fireshaped armor and weapons. Azer experts with sufficient ranks in the appropriate Craft skill also frequently forge such items.

A fireshaped suit of armor or weapon has all the base statistics of the normal item except as noted here.

REQUIREMENTS

The creator of a fireshaped item must be a native of the Elemental Plane of Fire and must make the item on that plane.

FIRESHAPED ARMOR AND SHIELDS

The fireshaped template can be added to any metallic armor or shield, but never to wooden shields, leather armor, hide armor, or armor made of any other flammable material.

Armor and shields with this template seem to gleam with a red hue in any light, and they sometimes appear to flicker as if possessed of an inner flame. Fire creatures usually craft fireshaped armor for servitors that are more susceptible to heat than they are.

In addition, fireshaped armor is made to appear as if it were flaming when struck in combat. The flames produced by such armor are not real, but they supply a light equivalent to that of a torch.

Salamander armorsmiths might make armor that resembles the flame patterns of a raging inferno, and other fire creatures favor similar motifs.

Cost: The fireshaped template adds 300 gp to the other costs associated with creating a given suit of armor or shield.

Affinities: Fire resistance, improved fire resistance, and greater fire resistance (special abilities).

Special: The wearer of fireshaped armor gains a +2 bonus on saves against fire effects, and on saves made to resist the effect of heat (see page 303 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

FIRESHAPED WEAPONS

Fire creatures construct weapons that mimic their own fiery natures to equip either themselves or their servitors. As a result, such weapons tolerate special abilities involving flame much better than ordinary weapons do. Thus, characters who hunt creatures of cold find fireshaped weapons particularly desirable.

The fireshaped template can be added to any weapon that has a metallic cutting edge. For example, a battleaxe with a wooden haft or a steel-shod staff could acquire the template, but a simple wooden club or staff could not.

Like their armor counterparts, fireshaped weapons are frequently made to appear as if they were flaming when wielded. The flames produced by such weapons are not real, but they supply a light equivalent to that of a torch. Flame-shaped greatswords are especially popular examples of these weapons.

Cost: The fireshaped template adds 800 gp to the other costs associated with creating a given weapon.

Affinities: Flaming burst (special ability); *flame tongue* (specific weapon).

Special: A fireshaped weapon burns with a subtle but palpable inner energy. It deals an extra 1 point of damage to a foe with the cold subtype.

GITHCRAFT TEMPLATE

The githcraft template can be added to any suit of armor, shield, or weapon crafted on the Astral Plane by a githyanki. Known throughout the planes as battle-crazed zealots, githyanki revere weapons and armor more highly than almost any other possession, and their craftmasters focus exclusively on items of warfare.

Githcraft items are distinctive in appearance, and non-githyanki creatures that acquire and use them are likely to face retribution when their equipment is recognized. Many creatures, however, are more than willing to risk githyanki wrath for the benefits offered by a githcraft item.

A githcraft suit of armor or weapon has all the base statistics of the normal item except as noted here.

Because the githyanki jealously guard the secrets of creating githcraft armor and weaponry, they remain the only creatures capable of crafting them. Some sages theorize that a githzerai with the requisite skill could also produce such items, but that claim is still unproven.

REQUIREMENTS

The creator of a githcraft item must be a githyanki and must make the item on the Astral Plane.

GITHCRAFT ARMOR AND SHIELDS

The githcraft template can be added to any suit of armor or any shield. It is sometimes quite difficult to determine by casual observation whether a particular set of githcraft armor is hide, leather, chain, or plate, since those who create it are not bound by design conventions. A particular suit of githcraft armor might be decorated with spikes, baroque elements, and components of other types of armor, all mixed together in a unique style of its own.

Cost: The githcraft template adds 600 gp to the other costs associated with creating a given suit of armor or shield.

Arcane Spell Failure Chance: The arcane spell failure chance of githcraft armor and shields is reduced by 5% (minimum 0%). Many githyanki are multiclass spellcasters, and their armorsmiths have learned to channel the race's natural affinity for magic into their creations.

Affinities: Mindarmor (special ability; see the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*); *mithral full plate of speed* (specific armor).

Special: The wearer of githcraft armor or the bearer of a githcraft shield gains a +1 bonus on Concentration checks.

GITHCRAFT WEAPONS

Most githcraft weapons are large and showy bladed items, such as greatswords or bastard swords. The githyanki are proud of their combat prowess and favor ostentatious weaponry.

The githcraft template can be added to any bladed weapon, though most githyanki smiths prefer to create weapons with large blades.

Githcraft weapons always look distinctive and more than a little menacing. A single weapon might combine

decorative features, such as a serrated edge and baroque elements, in a somewhat organic style. During the forging process, every githcraft weapon is given a name of great power and promise.

Cost: The githcraft template adds 900 gp to the other costs associated with creating a given weapon.

Affinities: Mindcrusher (special ability; see the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*); githyanki *silver sword* (specific weapon; see page 128 of the *Monster Manual*).

Special: A githcraft weapon deals an extra 1 point of damage against psionic creatures.

GLORYBORN TEMPLATE

The gloryborn template can be added to any suit of armor, shield, or weapon crafted on the Heroic Domains of Ysgard by a smith native to that plane. The mighty battlesmiths of Ysgard sing songs of glory and honor while working their forges to create weapons and armor for the countless heroes who do battle there. Many of these artisans are titans, though angels and other denizens of the plane possess the skills required to craft gloryborn items. Though gloryborn items are almost always crafted for use in the eternal battles of Ysgard, visitors to the plane can acquire weapons or armor with this template if they can locate an owner willing to part with them.

A gloryborn suit of armor or weapon has all the base statistics of the normal item except as noted here. An evil creature that wears gloryborn armor or wields a gloryborn weapon takes a –1 penalty on attack rolls because it finds the innate purity of the item uncomfortable and distracting.

REQUIREMENTS

The creator of a gloryborn item must be native to the Heroic Domains of Ysgard and must make the item on that plane.

GLORYBORN ARMOR AND SHIELDS

Ysgardian natives emphasize heroic recklessness in battle, and armor with this template reflects that philosophy. Though they are constructed to heroic proportions and tend to bear flashy decorations, gloryborn armor and shields frequently seem to lack some vital defensive piece. The overall look might awe viewers or even strike terror into the wearer's enemies, but the items frequently look incomplete. For example, a suit of gloryborn leather armor might be little more than a set of elaborate leather straps constructed to show off the wearer's bulging muscles by leaving portions of his torso entirely exposed. Likewise, a gloryborn shield cut to resemble a fearsome mask might be oddly shaped and appear ill-suited for protection. But such oddities of design do not limit the effectiveness of gloryborn armor or shields. Gloryborn armor might look as though it couldn't stop a kitchen knife, let alone a greataxe, but something about its design seems to draw attacks toward protected areas, making it just as effective as armor crafted on other planes.

Cost: The gloryborn template adds 150 gp to the other costs associated with creating a given suit of armor or shield.

Affinities: Bashing (shield special ability); *rhino hide* (specific armor).

Special: A character wearing gloryborn armor gains a +1 bonus to AC when charging. (The normal penalty to AC for charging also applies.) This bonus lasts until the start of the wearer's next turn.

GLORYBORN WEAPONS

Gloryborn weapons are as flashy and seemingly ill conceived as gloryborn armor is. For example, a gloryborn longsword might have so many bizarre, intimidating spikes jutting from its pommel that it looks as though it should be unbalanced. But, as with gloryborn armor and shields, the apparent poor design does not diminish the item's utility. Gloryborn weapons function as well as or better than standard weapons created elsewhere. In fact, wielders of gloryborn weapons report feeling unlimited confidence in battle, and they perform the sort of great deeds about which bards write their epic songs.

Cost: The gloryborn template adds 600 gp to the other costs associated with creating a given weapon.

Affinities: Thundering (special ability); *luck blade* (0 wishes) (specific weapon).

Special: A gloryborn weapon deals an extra 1 point of damage on a charge attack.

HELLFORGED TEMPLATE

The hellforged template can be added to any suit of armor, shield, or weapon crafted on the Nine Hells of Baator by a smith native to that plane. Chain devils frequently make hellforged items for their masters, who outfit entire elite regiments with them.

A hellforged suit of armor or weapon has all the base statistics of the normal item except as noted here. A good creature that wears hellforged armor or wields a hellforged weapon takes a –1 penalty on attack rolls because it finds the innate vileness of the item uncomfortable and distracting.

REQUIREMENTS

The creator of a hellforged item must be native to the Nine Hells of Baator and must make the item on that plane.

HELLFORGED ARMOR AND SHIELDS

Hellforged armor and shields have a green cast stemming from the noxious combination of chemicals used in their

creation. In addition, they generally appear heavier than their normal counterparts because a firm, solid defense is generally valued over speed in the Nine Hells.

Cost: The hellforged template adds 1,000 gp to the other costs associated with creating a given suit of armor or shield.

Hardness: The hardness of a hellforged suit of armor or shield is increased by 1.

Hit Points: The hit points of a hellforged suit of armor or shield are increased by 5.

Maximum Dexterity Bonus: The maximum Dexterity bonus granted by hellforged armor or a hellforged shield is reduced by 1 (minimum +0). If the item has no maximum Dexterity bonus, this adjustment does not apply.

Armor Check Penalty: The armor check penalty imposed by hellforged armor or a hellforged shield improves by 1 (minimum –1).

Arcane Spell Failure: The arcane spell failure chance imposed by hellforged armor or a hellforged shield increases by 5% (minimum 5%).

Affinities: Fortification (light, moderate, and heavy); *breastplate of command* (specific armor).

Special: A suit of hellforged armor grants a +1 bonus to its wearer's AC whenever she is adjacent to an ally. This benefit does not apply to hellforged shields.

HELLFORGED WEAPONS

Like hellforged armor, weapons with this template are designed with resolute sturdiness and focus in mind. Their construction reflects this philosophy succinctly.

Cost: The hellforged template adds 1,500 gp to the other costs associated with creating a given weapon.

Hardness: The hardness of a hellforged weapon is increased by 1.

Hit Points: The hit points of a hellforged weapon are increased by 5.

Affinities: Speed (special ability); *sword of subtlety* (specific weapon). Crafters of hellforged weapons find that their handiwork rewards good tactics and helps their wielders focus attacks on individual foes.

Special: A hellforged weapon deals an extra 1 point of damage to any foe that the wielder flanks.

PITSPAWNED TEMPLATE

The pitspawned template can be added to any suit of armor, shield, or weapon crafted on the Infinite Layers of the Abyss by a smith native to that plane. Mariliths sometimes take the necessary ranks in the relevant Craft skill to make such items, although half-fiends of various kinds also slave away in the dark forges of the Abyss. Evil titans and fiendish yuan-ti that call the Abyss home also create pitspawned gear occasionally.

A pitspawned suit of armor or weapon has all the base statistics of the normal item except as noted here. A good creature that wears pitspawned armor or wields a pitspawned weapon takes a –1 penalty on attack rolls because it finds the innate vileness of the item uncomfortable and distracting.

REQUIREMENTS

The creator of a pitspawned item must be native to the Infinite Layers of the Abyss and must make the item on that plane.

PITSPAWNED ARMOR AND SHIELDS

A pitspawned suit of armor or shield is dark in color, but when the light hits it at the right angle, dark tones of blood-red seem to reflect from its surface. Good creatures grow uneasy at the mere sight of such an item because of this unusual effect. Abyssal smiths most often apply this template to light armor because speed is a fundamental requirement for Abyssal armies.

Cost: The pitspawned template adds 600 gp to the other costs associated with creating a given suit of armor or shield.

Affinities: Shadow, improved shadow, and greater shadow (special abilities); *demon armor* (specific armor). Pitspawned armor can easily be infused with the darkness required for shadow armor, and its origin makes it a natural choice for use in any magic armor designed to harness the power of the Abyss.

Special: Any creature that strikes the wearer of pitspawned armor or the bearer of a pitspawned shield with a melee attack takes 1 point of damage. The damage from multiple pitspawned items doesn't stack, so striking a creature wearing pitspawned armor and carrying a pitspawned shield deals only 1 point of damage to the attacker. This damage is not subject to damage reduction.

PITSPAWNED WEAPONS

Like pitspawned armor and shields, pitspawned weapons are dark in color and have a blood-red cast when viewed at the proper angle. These weapons tend to reflect the demonic combat philosophy of overwhelming foes with massive damage.

Cost: The pitspawned template adds 1,000 gp to the other costs associated with creating a given weapon.

Affinities: Keen (special ability); *sword of life stealing* (specific weapon). A pitspawned weapon is constructed especially to deal tremendous amounts of damage, or even to destroy a creature's life force.

Special: A pitspawned weapon is more likely to deal grievous injuries than its normal counterparts. The wielder gains a +2 bonus on rolls made to confirm critical hits with this weapon.

SOULFORGED TEMPLATE

The soulforged template can be added to any suit of armor, shield, or weapon crafted on the Seven Mounting Heavens of Celestia by a smith native to that plane. While angels (such as astral devas, planetars, and solars) are quite capable of creating soulforged items, they are more commonly crafted by the spirits of dwarf smiths in the realm of Moradin the Soul Forger, for whom the template is named.

A soulforged suit of armor or weapon has all the base statistics of the normal item except as noted here. An evil creature that wears soulforged armor or wields a soulforged weapon takes a –1 penalty on attack rolls because it finds the innate purity of the item uncomfortable and distracting.

REQUIREMENTS

The creator of a soulforged item must be native to the Seven Mounting Heavens of Celestia and must make the item on that plane.

SOULFORGED ARMOR AND SHIELDS

Soulforged armor is brilliant silver in color. Though gold is a common element in the filigree and decorative designs that highlight these items, the metal turns white because of the item's incredible purity. In addition, the surfaces of soulforged armor and shields, if they are held at just the right angle, bear traceries reminiscent of the feathers of archon wings. Though this design feature is not added intentionally, it is always present. The celestial smiths who craft soulforged items focus on power and steadfast resolution in the overall design.

Cost: The soulforged template adds 400 gp to the other costs associated with creating a given suit of armor or shield.

Hardness: The hardness of a soulforged suit of armor or a soulforged shield is increased by 1.

Hit Points: The hit points of a soulforged suit of armor or a soulforged shield are increased by 5.

Affinities: Invulnerability (armor special ability) and blinding (shield special ability); *celestial armor* (specific armor). The power inherent in soulforged armor lends itself well to both offense and defense.

Special: Anyone wearing soulforged armor or carrying a soulforged shield gains a +2 bonus on ability checks made to resist being bull rushed or tripped.

SOULFORGED WEAPONS

Soulforged weapons feature the same silver sheen and feathery pattern as soulforged armor and shields. In addition, a distant hymn of praise to the forces of good is audible with each swing of the weapon.

Cost: The soulforged template adds 800 gp to the other costs associated with creating a given weapon.

Hardness: The hardness of a soulforged weapon is increased by 1.

Hit Points: The hit points of a soulforged weapon are increased by 5.

Affinities: Defending (special ability); *holy avenger* (specific weapon). Although soulforged weapons are tools of offense, they are also receptive to defensive magic.

Special: A soulforged weapon deals an extra 2 points of damage against a foe who is charging. This adjustment applies only from the point at which the foe begins charging until he resolves the attack (or attacks) at the end of the charge.

ARTIFACTS IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Most magic items have a built-in mechanic for regulation and game balance—namely, expense. Not many NPCs can afford a +2 *keen longsword*, and fewer still can afford a *ring of protection +5*. And only the most powerful characters and dangerous monsters can brag about owning expensive items such as an *iron flask* or a *mirror of life trapping*. Yet even these potent magic items pale in comparison to the power of the artifact.

Artifacts have a long-standing tradition in D&D campaigns. They've been wielded by demon lords, served as the focus of huge quests, and bedeviled the gods themselves. You should never introduce an artifact into your campaign on a whim because such items can have far-reaching effects on your world and on the flow of your game, often in unforeseen ways.

Even so, however, artifacts add considerable depth and interest to a campaign if used correctly.

REASONS TO INTRODUCE ARTIFACTS

When you decide to introduce an artifact into your game, take a good, long look at the abilities of the one you have chosen. Many minor artifacts, such as a *book of exalted deeds* or a *philosopher's stone*, are single-use items. Such artifacts produce few lasting repercussions beyond their (relatively) narrow band of influence. Other minor artifacts, such as a *hammer of thunderbolts* or a *sphere of annihilation*, are persistent; they stick around and can be used over and over. The continued presence of this kind of artifact can quickly unbalance a campaign, and the situation gets even worse when a major artifact enters the picture.

Because of such lingering effects, you should always have a reason for introducing an artifact into your game. Perhaps the goal of a series of adventures is to recover an artifact from an ancient lost city and return it to its proper immortal owner. Or perhaps a player character has inherited or found a deactivated artifact that slowly

regains its powers as the campaign progresses. Or maybe the PCs know that one of the campaign's villains has gotten his hands on an artifact, and they must research a way to destroy it before wresting control of it away from the villain.

Below are several examples of how to introduce the artifacts detailed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* into your game while retaining the proper sense of awe and mystery. You can use these sample introductions as inspiration for your own stories, or to guide you in introducing artifacts from other sources.

MINOR ARTIFACTS

Minor artifacts, while extremely powerful, are not unique. Such items can be introduced into a campaign as treasure gained from particularly tough battles, or as rewards from powerful patrons for a job well done.

Book of Exalted Deeds

If one player character in your group is playing a good-aligned divine spellcaster, his church might reward him for completing a particularly perilous quest with a *book of exalted deeds*. If the character is below the average party level, access to the book is a good way to give him a little boost.

Book of Infinite Spells

If your group lacks a particular type of spellcaster, you can include a *book of infinite spells* in the treasure hoard of an especially powerful monster. The book should contain a collection of spells that you feel would be particularly helpful to the party, such as healing spells for a group without a cleric, or powerful evocation spells for a group without a wizard or sorcerer. The fact that nonspellcasters have a greater chance of causing a page to turn than their spellcasting counterparts do means that this artifact will either not be used too often or will quickly pass out of the campaign on its own.

Book of Vile Darkness

A *book of vile darkness* has recently come into the possession of a good-aligned church. To destroy it, the clerics must perform a week-long ritual without interruption. To that end, they might hire the PCs to protect their privacy from agents of the dark forces that seek the book's return.

Deck of Many Things

The capricious, random nature of this notorious artifact can completely derail a campaign if someone draws the wrong card. Some of its cards can grant additional awards, but others can cause sudden hardships.

Thus, a *deck of many things* is best introduced into a campaign as part of a treasure hoard or as a prize at the end of a long, grueling adventure, when the PCs have no plans for the immediate future. Not only does such a situation give characters the chance to bounce back from hardships, but in many cases, the cards can generate new adventure hooks for the group. For example, a character who draws the Rogue card or the Flames card might have to track down and defeat his new enemy, or a player whose character who draws the Void card might end up playing a cohort while the rest of the party attempts to rescue the hapless character.

Hammer of Thunderbolts

This weapon can deal incredible damage, especially when combined with a *belt of giant strength* and *gauntlets of ogre power*. Since it represents raw power, the hammer should come as a reward for a particularly brutal set of fights. For example, the hammer makes a fine capstone for a great wyrm dragon's treasure horde.

If you introduce a *hammer of thunderbolts*, assume that its new owner will soon find a way to get the matching belt and gauntlets. Don't throw up unnecessary roadblocks to prevent his acquisition of these items—after all, if you've given a character the hammer, it makes no sense to arbitrarily deny him access to the belt and gauntlets.

Philosopher's Stone

The gold and silver created by a *philosopher's stone* can suddenly disrupt the economy of your campaign. Since 5,000 pounds of silver equates to 25,000 gp, and 1,000 pounds of gold equates to 50,000 gp, you can substitute a single *philosopher's stone* in a treasure hoard for another item worth roughly 50,000 gp without causing too much disruption.

Alternatively, if your campaign has no clerics, or if the party does not have ready access to spells that bring back the dead, a *philosopher's stone* can quickly become invaluable for its *true resurrection* power. A party that depended upon this ability would be certain to use its *philosopher's stone* only in the greatest of emergencies.

Sphere of Annihilation/Talisman of the Sphere

A *sphere of annihilation* spells trouble for a campaign. Ideally, it should enter the campaign in the hands of a villain who is using it to menace a kingdom or ruin a nation. The PCs' mission in such a case is to track down a *rod of cancellation* and use it to destroy the sphere. This scenario provides an easy way to get rid of the disruptive item.

If the PCs instead decide to keep control of the sphere, make them work for it. Word of the item should spread far and wide, and powerful spellcasters with ill intent should regularly seek them out, hoping to steal it away. After two or three close calls, most groups will be only too glad to see the artifact leave the campaign.

Staff of the Magi

One of the greatest artifacts a wizard or sorcerer can hope to possess, a *staff of the magi* has less value to a group that does not include such a character. As a general rule, if you aren't comfortable with two of the characters in your group having *staffs of power*, don't throw a *staff of the magi* into the mix. If, on the other hand, your campaign is scheduled to end after one more adventure and your group will soon be starting an entirely new campaign, a *staff of the magi* can serve as an excellent late-campaign reward and prize.

Talisman of Pure Good/Talisman of Ultimate Evil

Since these two artifacts have charges, you can effectively limit their use by introducing them with a lower number of charges than normal. You can also control them by limiting the number of powerful cleric antagonists that the PCs face. Furthermore, don't automatically assume that all cleric villains who own one of these talismans are automatically "exceptionally pure in thought and deed" or "exceptionally foul and perverse." After all, how many of your PCs actually fit into one of those categories?

Talisman of Zagy

The potential effect of this strange artifact on your campaign is difficult to determine. About 95% of the time, it won't be any more disruptive than a single *wish*. It can, however, be as bad as having three or more *wishes*, and for several months after its introduction, traps can become useless menaces. Despite the small chance of a serious effect, however, this artifact is one of the safest to introduce into a game, and you can substitute it for treasure worth around 30,000 gp without too much worry.

MAJOR ARTIFACTS

Major artifacts are unique objects—that is, only one of each can ever exist in a campaign. Thus, you shouldn't give them out as treasure or rewards. Each such artifact should be the focus of a particularly complex and perilous quest, or in the possession of a powerful NPC who doesn't want to give it up without a good reason.

The Hand and Eye of Vecna

The cult of Vecna keeps these potent relics of their dread god in secret lairs, guarded by its most dangerous members and allies. Nevertheless, adventurers often manage to defeat these cult cells and claim the artifacts for their own. Some believe that Vecna enjoys this process because it allows his influence to extend beyond the walls of his own religion now and again.

The *Hand and Eye of Vecna* are best introduced as the possessions of a powerful NPC villain. The PCs can claim them upon her defeat, but they might soon come to loathe the dread artifacts as much as they covet their power, since the cultists of Vecna will stop at nothing to regain them.

The Mace of Cuthbert

St. Cuthbert typically keeps his mace at his side, making it difficult—if not impossible—for others to use it. Yet once in a while, he lends the mace to a particularly devout worshiper. Thus, it might come into a PC's hands for as much as a few months as a reward for some great deed, or when a PC worshiper of St. Cuthbert reaches 20th level. Occasionally, however, someone to whom St. Cuthbert has lent his mace loses it to the enemy. In that case, his clerics quickly organize fellow worshipers and well-paid mercenaries to recover the artifact. St. Cuthbert never directly intervenes to reclaim his mace, but once his faithful rescue it, he immediately takes it back. It's up to his faithful to prove their devotion to him, but they certainly shouldn't be able to enjoy the benefits of the mace after letting it fall into enemy hands.

The Moaning Diamond

This artifact's powers are fairly limited in scope, but they are still capable of disrupting a campaign. After all, gaining an elder earth elemental as a loyal minion is not normally possible without a 9th-level spell such as *gate* or *summon nature's ally* IX. If your group already has access to these spells, the *Moaning Diamond* isn't a bad option as artifacts go. It is best introduced as a cherished possession of a powerful creature with the Earth subtype.

The Orbs of Dragonkind

These magic orbs are universally loathed by all dragonkind, and that opinion is one of the few that all the various dragons hold. The destruction of these artifacts is beyond the power of the dragons, so they usually entrust the guardianship of the orbs to the most powerful members of their kind. A character who wins control of an *Orb of Dragonkind* soon finds herself the target of endless dragon-sponsored attacks. The dragons prefer to call upon their most powerful allies to mount such attacks rather than risking their own lives against the lost orb's domination power.

The Shadowstaff

This powerful artifact is a favorite of necromancers, conjurers, evil clerics, and other individuals who have strong ties to the Plane of Shadow. Thus, it should most often appear as the tool of a powerful villain. Because the *Shadowstaff* itself is not evil, however, it makes a nice, handy reward for a group that manages to defeat the powerful creatures it attracts.

The Shield of Prator

This artifact of law and good tends to bring chaos and evil in its wake. The *Shield of Prator* surfaces in the hands of a powerful hero when it is needed the most, yet it always seems to fall to the evil forces that inevitably rise to claim

it. This cycle could be the result of a hidden, powerful curse on the artifact, but it more likely stems from the fact that some very powerful fiendish lords value it as a trophy, and they spare no effort to reclaim it when someone wrests it from their clutches.

The Sword of Kas

When evil fights evil, good triumphs—usually. In the battle between Vecna and Kas, though, the ultimate victor might have been evil. While that battle resulted in the destruction of a particularly loathsome empire, it also resulted in the creation of three powerful artifacts. Of these, the *Sword of Kas* might be the most troubling. The Cult of Vecna keeps the *Hand* and *Eye of Vecna* hidden much of the time, so they present little difficulty until they are found. The *Sword of Kas* has no such keeper; it passes from petty warlord to despotic ruler to murderous lunatic with willful glee.

The PCs might encounter this artifact multiple times during the course of a campaign. They could defeat one villain who owns it, only to have another one steal it away from them, and this cycle could repeat itself numerous times. The sword might even become a motif that ties together villain after villain, and eventually the PCs could come to view it as a villain in its own right.

Illus. by W. Reynolds

REMOVING AN ARTIFACT

One of the best methods for controlling how much impact an artifact has on your campaign is to engineer a situation that makes the PCs want to be rid of it before too much time passes.

One way to achieve this goal is to offer the PCs an award for returning it to its rightful owner. The award should be very tempting—experience points sufficient to gain a level should be more than enough. Returning a major artifact should also bring the approval of the gods, who might reward each party member with a major magic item, a *wish* spell, or even a divinely granted bonus feat or permanent spell-like ability. Such special rewards usually come through a powerful cleric or outsider proxy rather than direct contact with the gods.

If the PCs prove resistant to the positive reinforcement of awards and prizes, negative reinforcement might work. Word of their prize doubtless spreads, and given time, all manner of powerful organizations and creatures might attempt to take the artifact away from them by force. Furthermore, if the PCs refused to return the artifact to its proper owner, the spurned organization or NPC might become one such antagonistic force. Defending their prize from seemingly endless attacks can eventually wear down the resolve of even the greediest character.

Finally, bear in mind that the gods also keep an eye on artifacts. If all else fails, you are certainly justified in having a deity show up and simply reclaim the artifact from the PCs. The deity might or might not reward them, just as he might or might not smite them. In any case, the fact that their actions resulted in divine intervention might be enough of a reward for the loss of a coveted artifact!

On the other hand, if the artifact isn't ruining your campaign and everyone in the group seems to be having fun with it, you might consider allowing it to remain in the group for a while. A powerful monster or group should still periodically attempt to steal it, but you need not go out of your way to make the PCs lose it.

Introducing an artifact into your campaign can also generate jealousy among the players. If you introduce a *staff of the magi* to the game and the nonwizards in the group get nothing, their players might grow angry about the increased power of the wizard. If you notice animosity developing, you might have to pay more attention to the needs and goals of the other players for a while. Often, simply making them a more important part of the story is enough to make the situation right, but sometimes you might need to pass out additional artifacts to the jealous players' characters to help keep the party "even." This tactic can quickly get out of control, though, if everyone in the group owns his own potent artifact.

One option for keeping the jealousy under control is to "rotate" artifacts. Allow the group to go on one adventure with the PC wizard and his *staff of the magi*, then engineer a method to remove the staff from play. Perhaps it was only on loan to the wizard for a month, or maybe someone steals it. Then, a few sessions later, you can introduce a new artifact that one of the other PCs can use. Continue this cycle as the campaign progresses, giving each PC a couple of sessions with a powerful artifact, and the jealousy and envy should begin to abate.

DESTROYING ARTIFACTS

Destroying an artifact should never be a simple task. Certain spells have the power to destroy artifacts, but using them is generally more dangerous than going on a quest to achieve the same end. *Mordenkainen's disjunction*, for example, has a 1% chance per caster level of destroying an artifact, but it has a much greater chance of bringing divine vengeance upon the caster, who also runs the very real risk of losing all spellcasting powers as a result of his actions. Finally, you are perfectly within your rights as DM to rule that effects such as *Mordenkainen's disjunction* can destroy only minor artifacts. If you take such a stance, however, you should inform the PCs immediately of this new house rule rather than springing it on them unannounced.

A far more interesting method of destroying an artifact is to tie its destruction to a quest. A classic adventure

Jozan drops the wand of Orcus into the tarrasque's gaping maw and tries to avoid suffering the same fate

plot line involves the recovery of a dreadful artifact from some extremely dangerous location, and then an equally harrowing quest to find a method of destroying it. The genre's most enduring classic, *The Lord of the Rings*, is based entirely on the concept that only through great trial and tribulation can an evil artifact be truly destroyed.

You should tailor the methods of destroying an artifact to both its nature and your campaign. As a general rule, a quest to destroy an artifact should involve the PCs visiting several legendary locations in the campaign world, and possibly coming into conflict with some of the campaign's legendary monsters as well. The *Epic Level Handbook* offers many excellent monster choices, but if you don't have that book, you can generate legendary creatures by advancing already tough monsters in Hit Dice or size, or by adding twenty levels of a character class. A party won't soon forget a fight with a 40-foot-tall, 36 HD marilith! And if all else fails, the handy tarrasque makes a memorable legendary monster as well.

Some sample methods for destroying artifacts are described below to help spark your imagination.

The Fires of Birth

The artifact can be destroyed only at the site of its creation. The actual method of destruction might involve throwing it into the fires of a deity's forge, striking it with another artifact at the site, or simply bringing it within 30 feet of the location where it was created.

The Impossible Void

The artifact is truly invulnerable and cannot be destroyed. The best the characters can do is to dispose of it in a place beyond the edge of possibility. An artifact that is cast into a region where no creature can ever reach it is effectively destroyed, since no one can ever again use it.

The Slavering Source

The body parts or blood of some legendary monster was used in the artifact's creation. The monster should be a unique, ageless being (such as a great wyrm dragon, an epic monster, or the tarrasque) that lives in a remote location. Because this creature has a visceral connection to the artifact, casting it into the monster's maw, or below its foot, or otherwise subjecting it to the creature's natural attacks can shatter it. In such a case, the monster immediately reabsorbs the parts of the artifact that came from its body—possibly granting it powers that it has long been denied, since they were stolen to forge the artifact in the first place.

The Gates of Hell

In this scenario, the only way to destroy the artifact is to smash it against a specific, legendary structure or object, such as the Gates of Hell. Alternatively, the "structure" could be a body part of some legendary monster or god, or even the foot of a humble ant. Discovering the location of this structure should constitute a series of adventures on its own.

Exposure to Purity

This method is similar to The Gates of Hell (see above), except that the artifact need only be exposed to some pure form of energy, such as the surface of the sun, the core of the Elemental Plane of Fire, or the blinding purity of the primal truth. Needless to say, this pure source of energy should also deal considerable damage to anyone carrying the artifact. In this scenario, the true problem isn't how to destroy the artifact, but how to get it close enough to the source to destroy it without dying in the process.

The Lifeblood of Evil

This scenario requires the party to slay a specific creature of great power, though it need not be an evil monster. The artifact must then be immersed in the creature's lifeblood, brain, or heart within 1 round of its death. The artifact then begins to resonate with the death of the creature and "dies" as well.

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Note: The information below might more properly be called a list of game elements. It features a level of detail not found in the table of contents on page 3 (for instance, all the new magic items are listed here), and as such it serves as an adjunct to the table of contents, with very little overlap between the two.

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